Serving Adult Participants in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sites serve adult participants who are 18 years or older living with a disability, as well as those who are 60 or older. Not all adults have the same nutrition needs. Health and social changes and lower amounts of physical activity may affect the dietary needs of older adults. The CACFP meal pattern for adults provides flexibilities to allow you to plan meals that best meet the needs of adults in your care. This approach relies on good communication between you, the program operator, and the adult participant (and/or their caregiver).

The information below shows the requirements for meals and snacks in the CACFP.

CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements for Adult Participants*

Breakfast

Milk (8 fl oz, 1 cup)
Vegetables, Fruits, or Both (½ cup)
Grains (2 oz eq)

Lunch/Supper

Milk (8 fl oz, 1 cup)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruits (½ cup)
Grains (2 oz eq)
Meats/Meat Alternates (2 oz eq)

Snack

Pick any 2:
Milk (8 fl oz, 1 cup)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruits (½ cup)
Grains (1 oz eq)
Meats/Meat Alternates (1 oz eq)

fl oz = fluid ounce oz eq = ounce equivalents
Ounce equivalents are a way to measure amounts of food.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, some State agencies may have opted into School Year 2021-2022 meal pattern waivers. Additional information on these waivers is available at:* ***fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/cn-2021-22-waivers-and-flexibilities*.

More training, menu planning, and nutrition education materials for the CACFP can be found at **TeamNutrition.USDA.gov**.

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Meal Components: A Closer Look

In addition to serving the meal components and amounts listed on page 1, reimbursable meals and snacks must meet the following requirements:

Fruits/Vegetables

- 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice may not be served more than once per day.

Grains

- Grains served for at least one meal or snack each day must be whole grain-rich.
- All grains served in the CACFP must be whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified.
- Grain-based desserts may not be served as part of a reimbursable meal or snack.
- Cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.

Milk

The following types of cow's milk may be served as part of a reimbursable meal or snack to adult participants. Fat-free versions of these milks may be unflavored or flavored.

- low-fat or fat-free milk
- low-fat or fat-free lactose-reduced milk
- low-fat or fat-free lactose-free milk
- low-fat or fat-free buttermilk
- low-fat or fat-free acidified milk
- ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk

Note: Some calcium-fortified non-dairy beverages (e.g., soymilks) that are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk may be served without a medical statement. Goat's milk that meets your State's standards for fluid milk may be served if your State allows it. Contact your State agency or sponsoring organization for more information.

Meal Pattern Flexibilities for Adult Participants

You may use these meal pattern flexibilities to meet the needs and preferences of your adult participants. Flexibilities are optional, not required.

Breakfast

Milk | Vegetables/ Fruits | Meats/ Meat Alternates

At breakfast, 2 oz eq of meats/meat alternates may be served in place of 2 oz eq of grains **up to 3 times per week**.

Lunch/Supper

Milk | Vegetables | Vegetables | Grains | Meats/ Meat Alternates

At lunch and supper, a ½ cup of a second, different vegetable may be served in place of fruit.

At Supper Only

Vegetables | Fruits | Grains | Meats/ Meat Alternates

At supper, fluid milk is optional. Water is a great choice if milk is not served.

Six oz or ¾ cup of yogurt may be served in place of an 8-fl oz serving of milk once per day. Yogurt must not be served as a meat alternate in the same meal. Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 oz.

Meal Service Options

The type of meal service you choose may depend on your participants' abilities. Some program operators choose to serve pre-plated meals so adult participants do not need to walk through a cafeteria-style tray line. Other program operators use Offer Versus Serve (OVS) meal service because it allows participants to decline some of the meal components offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper. OVS is optional in the CACFP. This type of meal service may help reduce food waste and give adult participants more food choices.

For more information on how to use Offer Versus Serve, check out Team Nutrition's "Offer Versus Serve in the Child and Adult Care Food Program" training worksheet, recorded webinar, and training slides at **TeamNutrition.USDA gov**.

Make Every Bite Count

Foods from all meal components are important for overall good health. However, the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* note several nutritional areas of concern for older adults.

A Note About Vitamin B-12

Vitamin B-12 can be a nutrient of concern for some older adults. Protein foods and fortified breakfast cereals are a good source of this vitamin.

Protein

Older adults, particularly those over 70 years, are less likely to eat enough protein foods. Foods in the CACFP meal pattern that are high in protein are meats, meat alternates, and milk.

To meet the protein needs of adult participants:

- ✓ Offer meats/meat alternates in place of grains at breakfast up to 3 times per week. Choose options that are lower in sodium and saturated fat.
- ✓ Offer meats/meat alternates at snack, such as tuna fish and crackers, yogurt and fruit, or cottage cheese and sliced vegetables.
- ✓ Serve fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or a creditable milk substitute (e.g., soymilk) at meals. Milk is an important source of protein, calcium, and vitamin D.
- ✓ Plan menus with beans, peas, and lentils as either the meat alternate or as the vegetable component of the meal. Beans, peas, and lentils provide protein as well as fiber.
- ✓ Consider adding seafood to the menu. Many types of fish provide vitamin D, vitamin B-12, and healthy fats. Fish can also be easy to chew.

You can find standardized recipes that meet adult meal pattern requirements at **theicn.org/cnrb/recipes-cacfp-adult-portions**.

Water

It is important that older adults drink enough water during the day to stay hydrated. Drinking water can also help with digestion and the absorption of nutrients from foods. Since the sense of thirst can decline with age, it can be helpful to:

- Place closed pitchers of water and cups where adult participants can easily find them.
- Put cups beside a sink, water fountain, or other source of drinking water. Or, pour and offer cups of water to adult participants throughout the day.
- Serve water at meals and snacks when milk is not served.

Certain foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are also high in water and can help with hydration.

Note: When self-serve water stations are not recommended, such as during a public health emergency or pandemic, try offering cups of water to adult participants regularly throughout the day. Always follow local health department health and safety guidelines.

Meal Modifications

CACFP sites must make reasonable modifications for disabilities. These **modifications** may pertain to the meal or to the meal service. For example, you may need to offer a different food or serve the food in a different way. Even if a participant takes medication or uses an assistive device, the CACFP site must make modifications for the disability.

A disability includes any physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities, such as food allergies, diabetes, or swallowing difficulties.

In many cases, you can modify meals to meet a participant's needs within the meal pattern requirements. For example, if a participant cannot eat grapefruit, you may serve a different fruit instead. In this case, a medical statement is not required.

In some cases, you may not be able to modify meals to meet a participant's needs within the meal pattern requirements. One example might be if a participant cannot eat any fruit. For this modified meal to be reimbursable, you must keep a signed medical statement in a secure location at your CACFP site.

The medical statement for modifications due to food allergies must include:

- The food(s) to be avoided and what to serve instead, and
- A brief explanation of how exposure to the food affects the participant.

The medical statement for a disability that does not include food allergies must state:

- The existence of a mental or physical disability,
- How the disability impacts the participant, and
- The modification needed.

For more information on accommodating disabilities, see Policy Memorandum CACFP 14-2017, SFSP 10-2017 "Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program" at **fns.usda.gov/cn/modifications-accommodate-disabilities-cacfp-and-sfsp**.

Modifications for Non-Disability Reasons

Whenever possible, CACFP sites are encouraged to accommodate requests for religious or cultural practices, dietary preferences, or other conditions that are not considered a disability. This can help ensure adult participants get the nutrition they need.

Talk With Participants

Talk with adult participants or their caregiver about any modifications they may need for meals or snacks. Use this information to help with menu planning.