



## Nutrition Standards for School Meals

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 required the US Department of Agriculture to update federal nutrition standards for school meals. The [new regulations](#) went into effect on July 1, 2012. The changes require:

**More fruits and vegetables:** Schools must offer students fruits and vegetables with every lunch and increase the portion sizes. Vegetable choices at lunch must include weekly offerings of: legumes, dark green, and red or orange vegetables. Every school breakfast must offer students a full cup of fruits or vegetables. Students are required to take at least one half-cup serving of fruits or vegetables with every school breakfast and lunch.

**Whole grains:** All grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich (51% whole grain). *Some schools have been granted temporary waivers permitting them to offer a few menu items that do not meet this standard.*

**Sodium limits:** Schools must gradually reduce sodium levels in school meals over a ten year period to meet the following limits:

**Sodium Reduction Target Timeline for School Meals**

| Grades                        | Target 1<br>(July 1, 2014) | Target 2<br>(July 1, 2017) | Final Target<br>(July 1, 2022) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| School Breakfast Program      |                            |                            |                                |
| K-5:                          | ≤540 mg                    | ≤485 mg                    | ≤430 mg                        |
| 6-8:                          | ≤600                       | ≤535                       | ≤470                           |
| 9-12:                         | ≤640                       | ≤570                       | ≤500                           |
| National School Lunch Program |                            |                            |                                |
| K-5:                          | ≤1,230                     | ≤935                       | ≤640                           |
| 6-8:                          | ≤1,360                     | ≤1,035                     | ≤710                           |
| 9-12:                         | ≤1,420                     | ≤1,080                     | ≤740                           |

**Calorie limits:** School meals must meet age-appropriate calorie minimums and maximums:

| Grades | Breakfast        | Lunch            |
|--------|------------------|------------------|
| K-5:   | 350-500 calories | 550-650 calories |
| 6-8:   | 400-550          | 600-700          |
| 9-12:  | 450-600          | 750-850          |

**Limits on unhealthy fat:** Meals cannot contain added trans-fat and no more than 10 percent of calories can come from saturated fat.

**Low-fat and fat-free milk:** Every school meal offers one cup of fat-free or 1% milk. Flavored milk must be fat-free. To meet calorie limits, milk processors have developed flavored milk with less added sugar.

**Free water:** Free drinking water must be available in the cafeteria during lunch and breakfast.