

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern for Infants

The CACFP infant meal pattern indicates the meal components that must be offered to infants from birth through 11 months. Breastmilk, iron-fortified infant formula, or portions of both must be served to all ages at each meal and snack. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends serving breast milk in place of formula from birth through 11 months.

The CACFP infant meal pattern encourages delaying the introduction of solid foods until 6 months of age. The minimum servings of solid foods are ranges that start at zero (0) because not all infants are developmentally ready to eat solid foods at the same time. Once an infant is developmentally ready to accept solid foods, the CACFP facility must offer them to the infant. CACFP facilities must prepare all foods to the appropriate texture and consistency to match each infant's feeding skills and prevent choking.



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Breakfast, Lunch, and Supper Infant Meal Pattern

Meal component	Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula ¹	4-6 fluid ounces	6-8 fluid ounces
Iron-fortified infant cereal ² or meats/meat alternates or both <i>Required when infant is developmentally ready</i>	None	0-¼ ounce equivalent (oz eq) ³ of dry iron-fortified infant cereal or 0-4 tablespoons of meat, fish, poultry, whole eggs, or cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils or 0-2 ounces of cheese or 0-4 ounces (½ cup) of cottage cheese or 0-4 ounces (½ cup) of yogurt ⁴ or <i>any combination of these foods</i>
Vegetables, fruits, or both ⁵ <i>Required when infant is developmentally ready</i>	None	0-2 tablespoons of vegetables, fruits, or any combination

¹ The CACFP facility must serve breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula, or portions of both. Breast milk is recommended from birth through 11 months. Breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding may be offered less than the minimum serving, with additional breastmilk offered later if the infant will consume more.

² Iron-fortified infant cereal is the only grain that credits at breakfast, lunch, and supper. An infant cereal is iron fortified if the ingredients list includes one of the following: “iron,” “ferric fumarate,” “electrolytic iron,” or “iron (electrolytic).”

³ For information on oz eq, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA’s resource, [Feeding Infants Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

⁴ Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Worksheet for Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA’s resource, [Calculating the Added Sugars Limit for Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

⁵ Fruit and vegetable juices cannot be served.

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Snack Infant Meal Pattern

Meal component	Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula ¹	4-6 fluid ounces	2-4 fluid ounces
Grains ^{2, 3} <i>Required when infant is developmentally ready</i>	None	0-½ oz eq of bread (e.g., biscuit, roll, corn muffin, pita bread, pancake, soft tortilla, or waffle) ^{2, 3} or 0-¼ oz eq of crackers ^{2, 3} or 0-¼ oz eq of iron-fortified infant cereal ⁴ or 0-¼ oz eq of ready-to eat (RTE) cereal ^{2, 3, 5} or <i>any combination of these foods</i>
Vegetables, fruits, or both ⁶ <i>Required when infant is developmentally ready</i>	None	0-2 tablespoons of vegetables, fruits, or any combination

¹ The CACFP facility must serve breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula, or portions of both. Breast milk is recommended from birth through 11 months. Breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding may be offered less than the minimum serving, with additional breastmilk offered later if the infant will consume more.

² Grains must be whole grain-rich, enriched meal, enriched flour, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). The CACFP infant meal pattern does not have a whole grain-rich requirement.

³ For information on oz eq, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA's resource, [Feeding Infants Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP](#).

⁴ An infant cereal is iron fortified if the ingredients list includes one of the following: "iron," "ferric fumarate," "electrolytic iron," or "iron (electrolytic)."

⁵ RTE breakfast cereals must be fortified or made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour. RTE cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Worksheet for Crediting Ready-to-eat \(RTE\) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA's resources, [Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Calculating the Added Sugars Limit for Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

⁶ Fruit and vegetable juices cannot be served.

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Infant Meal Pattern Guidance

Guidance on meeting the infant meal pattern and crediting requirements is available in [USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025: Feeding Infants and Meal Pattern Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers](#) and the USDA's guide, [Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For more information, visit the CSDE's [Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Breast Milk and Iron-fortified Infant Formula

Breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding may be offered less than the minimum serving, with additional breast milk offered later if the infant will consume more.

CACFP facilities must offer at least one [iron-fortified infant formula](#) that meets the CACFP requirements. Parents/guardians may choose to decline the offered formula and provide expressed breast milk or a different iron-fortified infant formula instead. This request is submitted to the CACFP facility using the CSDE's form, [Accepting/Rejecting Infant Formula in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

If a parent/guardian chooses to provide breast milk (expressed breast milk or directly breastfeeding on site) or a creditable infant formula, and the infant is consuming solid foods, the CACFP facility must provide all other required meal components (refer to the "[Breast Milk or Formula Provided by Parent or Guardian](#)" section of the CSDE's Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage).

CACFP facilities may claim reimbursement for meals and snacks containing parent/guardian-provided expressed breast milk or an allowable infant formula when they are served to the infant by the child care provider. This includes meals and snacks for infants who are consuming only breast milk or an allowable infant formula. The USDA also allows CACFP facilities to claim reimbursement for meals and snacks when a parent directly breastfeeds their infant at the child care center or family day care home.

Solid Foods

Solid foods are required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept them. Guidance on the crediting requirements for solid foods is available in the "[Crediting Infant Foods](#)" section of the CSDE's Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage. For a list of creditable and noncreditable foods, refer to "[Appendix F: Infant Foods List](#)" in the USDA's guide, *Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

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Menu Records

CACFP facilities must keep daily menu records of all meals and snacks served to each infant enrolled in the CACFP. Sample infant menu forms are available in the "[Infant Forms](#)" section of the CSDE's Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/infants/infant_meal_pattern_cacfp.pdf.



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