

Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This document summarizes the crediting requirements for lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#). These requirements apply to all CACFP child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers.



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CACFP facilities may choose, but are not required, to offer lactose-free/reduced milk as the fluid milk component. Lactose-free milk and lactose-reduced milk are fluid milk and credit the same as regular milk in the CACFP meal patterns. These types of milk are processed by adding lactase enzymes to reduce or eliminate the lactose (naturally occurring milk sugar) found in regular milk.

Participants who cannot digest the lactose found in regular milk may be able to drink lactose-free/reduced milk. The USDA recommends these types of milk as the first choice for participants with lactose intolerance.

Allowable Types of Lactose-Free/Reduced Milk

The USDA's CACFP meal patterns have different milk requirements. These requirements address milk fat content and restrictions for flavored milk. The allowable types of lactose-free/reduced milk for each meal pattern are indicated below.

The CACFP meal patterns require unflavored whole milk for age 1. The allowable types of milk for ages 2 and older and adult participants include whole milk, reduced-fat (2%) milk, low-fat (1%) milk, and fat-free milk. Unflavored milk must be served to ages 1-5. Flavored milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only unflavored milk. Allowable types of milk for all ages also include cultured milk, such as cultured buttermilk, cultured kefir milk, and cultured acidophilus milk; acidified milk, such as acidified kefir milk and acidified acidophilus milk; and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk. CACFP menus must document the type of milk served to each age group.

Child care centers that operate in public schools must also meet the additional state beverage requirements for milk under [Section 10-221q](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). For more information, refer to "[Additional State Requirements for Milk in Public Schools](#)" in this document.

For more information on fluid milk, refer to "[Allowable Types of Milk](#)" in the "Milk" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

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Additional State Milk Requirements for Child Care Programs in Public Schools

In addition to meeting the USDA's requirements for fluid milk, child care programs that operate in public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements of [C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#). Milk cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce. These requirements apply to all types of fluid milk (including lactose-free/reduced milk) available for sale to students in public schools, including reimbursable meals and snacks and a la carte sales.

Commercial products that meet the federal and state requirements for milk are included in List 16: Milk on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. For more information on the state beverage statute, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Beverages for Connecticut Public Schools](#), and visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or RCCIs.

Requests for Lactose-Free/Reduced Milk

Parents/guardians are not required to submit a written request for lactose-free/reduced milk. These products are fluid milk and credit as the milk component in the CACFP.

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Summary of Requirements

The table below summarizes the federal and state requirements for lactose-free/reduced milk in the CACFP.

Table 1. Summary of requirements for lactose-free/reduced milk

Requirements	Implementation guidance
Allowable types (USDA meal pattern regulations)	<p>Credits the same as regular milk in the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs and must meet the applicable CACFP meal pattern requirements for each grade group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 1: Unflavored whole milk. • Age 1-5: Unflavored whole milk, reduced-fat milk, low-fat milk, or fat-free milk. • Age 6 and older and adult participants: Unflavored or flavored whole milk, reduced-fat milk, low-fat milk, or fat-free milk. Note: The USDA's CACFP best practices recommend serving only unflavored milk.
Child care centers in public schools only: State nutrition standards (C.G.S. Section 10-221q: beverages)	In addition to the USDA's requirements for fluid milk above, milk available for sale to students in public schools cannot exceed 4 grams of total sugars per ounce and cannot contain artificial sweeteners (refer to " Additional State Requirements for Milk in Public Schools " in this document).
Documentation	None required: Lactose-free/reduced milk is fluid milk and credits as the milk component in the CACFP.
Identifying allowable products	Refer to " Allowable types (USDA regulations) " above in this chart.

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Resources

[Bite Size: Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Meal Patterns Module 5: Milk Component](#) (“Bite Size Meal Pattern Training” section of CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/bite-size-meal-pattern-training>

[CACFP regulations 7 CFR 226.20\(a\)\(1\) Fluid milk](#) :
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20\(a\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20(a)(1))

[Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/guide_meal_modifications_cacfp_adults.pdf

[Guide to Meal Modifications for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/guide_special_diets_cacfp.pdf

[Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

[Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons](#) (CSDE’s Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/milk-substitutes-for-non-disability-reasons>

[Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

[Summary Charts of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/summary_chart_meal_modifications_cacfp.pdf

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[USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(89 FR 31962\):](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for>

[USDA Final Rule: Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs \(91 FR 25073\):](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09212/expanding-fluid-milk-options-in-child-nutrition-programs)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09212/expanding-fluid-milk-options-in-child-nutrition-programs>

[USDA Memo CACFP 01-2025: Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk and Substitutions in the CACFP, Questions and Answers:](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/nutrition-requirements-fluid-milk-qas)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/nutrition-requirements-fluid-milk-qas>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) 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/specdiet/lactose_free_reduced_milk_cacfp.pdf.



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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