

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

School Year 2024-25 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025)

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) preschool meal patterns (ages 1-5) for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns. The requirements for the preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children. For information on the preschool meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Preschool Meal Patterns and Crediting Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the “Grains Component” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Definition of Breakfast Cereals

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations ([21 CFR 170.3\(n\)\(4\)](#)) define breakfast cereals as ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and instant and regular hot cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). RTE breakfast cereals can be eaten as sold and are typically fortified with vitamins and minerals.

## Overview of Crediting Requirements

Breakfast cereals must meet two criteria to credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns: 1) a creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ) must be the first ingredient or the cereal must be fortified; and 2) sugars cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. Creditable breakfast cereals may be served as the grains component at any meal or snack.

The CSDE recommends that SFAs check the cereal's sugar content first, before determining if the cereal contains creditable grains. Breakfast cereals that exceed the sugar limit do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

## Steps to identify creditable breakfast cereals for the preschool meal patterns

The steps below show how to identify breakfast cereals that credit in the preschool meal patterns. To credit as a whole grain-rich (WGR) food, breakfast cereals must meet additional requirements (refer to "[WGR Requirement](#)" in this document).

1. Does the breakfast cereal meet the sugar limit (refer to "[Sugar Limit](#)" in this document) or is the breakfast cereal on the list of breakfast cereals for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?
  - Yes: Go to step 2.
  - No: The cereal is not creditable.
2. Is the first ingredient a creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ)?
  - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
  - No: Go to step 3.
3. Does the breakfast cereal's product formulation statement (PFS) indicate that creditable grains are the primary ingredient by weight? Refer to "[Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals](#)" in this document.
  - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
  - No: Go to step 4.

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4. Is the breakfast cereal fortified with vitamins and minerals? Refer to “[Fortified breakfast cereals](#)” in this document.
  - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
  - No: The cereal is not creditable.

To credit as a WGR food, RTE and cooked breakfast cereals must meet additional requirements (refer to “[WGR Requirement](#)” in this document).

### Sugar Limit

RTE and cooked breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). This sugar limit applies to breakfast cereals as purchased.

Effective with school year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

SFAs may choose to add toppings to breakfast cereals to increase their appeal. However, the USDA strongly encourages SFAs to offer healthy toppings for breakfast cereals, such as fruit instead of sugar. Minimizing sweet toppings will help reduce consumption of added sugars, which contribute calories without essential nutrients.

The USDA allows three methods for determining if breakfast cereals meet the sugar limit, which are described below. A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if it complies with at least one of these methods.

#### Method 1: WIC breakfast cereals list

A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if it is listed on any state WIC Program’s approved breakfast cereals list. WIC-approved whole-grain foods comply with the same WGR criteria as the preschool meal patterns. The Connecticut WIC food guides are available on the Connecticut State Department of Public Health’s [Approved Food Guide](#) webpage.

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### Method 2: USDA's sugar limit chart

Method 2 eliminates the need to use calculations for the sugar limit by using the sugar limit chart listed in the USDA's resource, [Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar](#). This chart includes common breakfast cereal serving sizes with the maximum grams of sugars per serving. A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if its sugars per serving (from the Nutrition Facts panel) do not exceed the maximum amount in the sugar limit chart. This USDA resource is available in English and Spanish on the USDA's [Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar](#) webpage.

The USDA's [Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar](#) webpage provides handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish on meeting the sugar limit for breakfast cereals.

### Method 3: Calculation of grams of sugars per serving (standard and rounding options)

A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if the SFA's calculations document that the product does not contain more than 0.212 grams of sugars per dry gram of cereal weight. This is the gram equivalent of no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (28.35 grams).

Method 3 includes two options for calculating compliance with the sugar limit. Both options use the sugars per serving from the product's Nutrition Facts panel.

1. The **standard method** calculates the grams of sugars per dry gram of cereal weight.
2. The **rounding method** calculates the sugar limit (grams) based on the serving weight (grams) of the cereal and uses the standard rules for rounding below.
  - Round up to the next whole number if the number after the decimal point is 0.5 or greater (e.g., 4.52 rounds up to 5).
  - Round down to the next whole number if the number after the decimal point is less than 0.5 (e.g., 6.148 rounds down to 6).

The rounding method is the calculation method used in the USDA's worksheet, *Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar* (refer to "[Method 2: USDA's sugar limit chart](#)" in this document).

The examples below sample calculations for the standard and rounding options of method 3, using the Nutrition Facts panel for the RTE breakfast cereal on the right. Each method shows that this breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, this

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cereal must also meet the requirements for creditable grains and provide the required weight or volume (refer to “[Creditable grains](#)” and “[Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document).

The standard and rounding calculation methods are both valid ways of demonstrating that a breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit. There may be times when a cereal meets the sugar limit using one of these methods, but not the other. If a cereal meets the sugar limit using at least one of these calculation methods, it complies with the sugar limit.

### Example 1: Calculating compliance with sugar limit using standard method

A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if it contains 0.212 grams of sugar per gram.

1. List the grams (g) of sugar per serving from the Nutrition Facts label.
  - 4 grams
2. List the serving size in grams (g) from the Nutrition Facts label.
  - 29 grams
3. Calculate the grams of sugar per gram of serving weight. Divide the grams of sugar per serving (step 1) by the serving size (step 2).
  - 4 grams divided by 29 grams = 0.1379 grams of sugar per gram of serving weight
4. Does the serving contain **0.212 grams of sugar or less** (step 3)?
  - Yes: 0.1379 grams is less than 0.212 grams. This breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit.

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### Example 2: Calculating compliance sugar limit using rounding method

A breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit if the grams (g) of sugars per serving (step 4) are equal to or less than rounded sugar limit (step 3).

1. List the serving size in grams (g) from the cereal's Nutrition Facts label.
  - 29 grams
2. Calculate the sugar limit for the product's serving size. Multiply serving size (g) by 0.212.
  - 6.148 grams of sugar per serving
3. Calculate the rounded sugar limit. If the number in step 2 ends in 0.5 or more, round up to the next whole number. If the number in step 2 ends in 0.49 or less, round down to the next whole number.
  - 6.148 grams of sugar per serving rounds down to 6 grams.
4. List the grams (g) of sugars per serving from the cereal's Nutrition Facts label:
  - 4 grams
5. Are the grams (g) of sugars per serving (step 4) equal to or less than the rounded sugar limit (step 3)?
  - Yes: 4 grams is less than 6 grams. This breakfast cereal meets the sugar limit.





# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Creditable Grains

Creditable grains are the ingredients in a grain product or recipe that count toward the grains component. They include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains.

Breakfast cereals must meet the following criteria to credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns: 1) A creditable grain must be the first ingredient, or the cereal must be fortified; and 2) the cereal cannot exceed 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document).

Menu planners must check the ingredients statement and Nutrition Facts label to determine if breakfast cereals meet these crediting criteria. The CSDE recommends checking the cereal’s sugar content first, before determining if the cereal contains creditable grains. Breakfast cereals that exceed the sugar limit do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

The three types of creditable RTE and cooked breakfast cereals include whole-grain breakfast cereals, enriched breakfast cereals, and fortified breakfast cereals. Crediting guidance for each type of breakfast cereal is summarized below.

### Whole-grain breakfast cereals

A breakfast cereal that is 100 percent whole grain contains only whole grains and will list a whole grain as the first ingredient. Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. Breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain credit as WGR foods in the preschool meal patterns. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain breakfast cereal.

- **Example of whole-grain cereal**

Ingredients: Whole grain rolled oats, sugar, natural flavors, salt.

This cooked cereal is 100 percent whole grain because the first and only grain ingredient (whole grain rolled oats) is a whole grain. To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit.

For information on identifying whole grains, refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).



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## Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched breakfast cereals contain five vitamins and minerals added in amounts required by the FDA to replace some of the nutrients lost during processing. The enrichment nutrients include:

- thiamin (vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride);
- riboflavin (vitamin B<sub>2</sub>); niacin (vitamin B<sub>3</sub> or niacinamide);
- folic acid (folate); and
- iron (reduced iron, ferrous sulfate, or ferric orthophosphate).

A breakfast cereal is enriched if the food is labeled as “enriched” or an enriched grain is the first ingredient.

- **Example of enriched breakfast cereal**

Ingredients: Puffed rice, ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This cereal is enriched because the ingredients statement lists the five enrichment nutrients (ferrous sulfate, niacinamide, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid). To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit.

For information on identifying enriched grains, refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

## Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals have nutrients added by the manufacturer that were not originally present, or that are at higher levels than originally present. Manufacturers may choose which additional nutrients to use for fortification. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients plus other vitamins and minerals that do not exist naturally in grains.

Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in the Child Nutrition Programs. A fortified breakfast cereal is not required to be enriched.

A breakfast cereal is fortified if the food is labeled as “fortified” or the ingredients statement lists the vitamins and minerals added to the product. These nutrients are typically listed after “Vitamins and Minerals.”

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The ingredients statements below show some examples of fortified breakfast cereals.

- **Example 1: Fortified breakfast cereal**

Ingredients: Milled corn, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B12.

This cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients listed after the statement, “Vitamins and Minerals.” However, it is not WGR because milled corn is not a whole grain. To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit.

- **Example 2: Fortified breakfast cereal**

Ingredients: Whole-grain wheat, raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.

This cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients listed after “Vitamins and Minerals.” It is WGR because whole-grain wheat is the first ingredient, and the cereal is fortified. To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit.

If the ingredients statement does not list any vitamins and minerals, the breakfast cereal is not fortified. To credit as the grains component, breakfast cereals that are not fortified must contain a creditable grain as the first ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight.

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the breakfast cereal contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document.

Fortified RTE breakfast cereals that contain a whole grain as the first ingredient credit as WGR foods in the preschool meal patterns.

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### Crediting bran and germ

Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains in all school nutrition programs. Bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) is the seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Germ (such as wheat germ) is the vitamin-rich embryo of the grain kernel.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a breakfast cereal that contains wheat bran as the first ingredient.



- **Example of bran cereal**

Ingredients: Wheat bran, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, vitamin D.

This cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients listed after the statement, “Vitamins and Minerals.” However, it is not WGR because wheat bran is not a whole grain; it credits the same as enriched grains. To credit as the grains component, this cereal must comply with the sugar limit

### Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals

SFAs must be able to document that all breakfast cereals served in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks meet the meal pattern crediting requirements. A PFS from the manufacturer is required if the product’s ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if the product meets the crediting or WGR criteria. For guidance on when a PFS is required and the information it must include, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

SFAs must verify the accuracy of the PFS before including the breakfast cereal in reimbursable meals and snacks. Crediting documentation must be maintained on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the breakfast cereal cannot credit as the grains component in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs.

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For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and the USDA's handouts, [Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). The steps for how to evaluate a grain product's PFS are available in the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Training on the requirements for PFS forms is available in Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

### WGR Requirement

The preschool meal patterns require at least one serving of WGR grains per day. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For guidance on menu planning considerations for the WGR requirement, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#).

The WGR criteria for the preschool meal patterns are different from the WGR criteria for the meal patterns for grades K-12. Except for grain-based desserts, grain foods that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 also meet the preschool WGR criteria. However, grain foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

### Preschool WGR criteria for breakfast cereals

The preschool meal patterns require different WGR criteria for RTE breakfast cereals in group I (such as puffed cereals, flaked or round cereals, and granola) and cooked breakfast cereals in group H (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). Groups H and I refer to the USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

The Exhibit A grain quantities are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#), indicates the Exhibit A ounce equivalents (oz eq) that apply to the preschool meal patterns. Groups F and G (grain-based desserts) are not included because grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns.

## Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

To be WGR, breakfast cereals must meet the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document) and comply with the requirements below.

- **WGR criteria for RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** The first ingredient must be a whole grain and the cereal must be fortified, or the cereal must be 100 percent whole grain. Fortification is not required for RTE breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain.
- **WGR criteria for cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** Cooked breakfast cereals must preschool meal patterns the USDA’s Rule of Three criteria for WGR foods. The Rule of Three requires that the first ingredient must be a whole grain and the next two grain ingredients (if any) must be whole grain, enriched, bran, or germ. Noncreditable grains (such as yellow corn flour, wheat flour, and soy flour) cannot be one of the first three grain ingredients. For guidance on the Rule of Three, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

### Steps to determine if RTE breakfast cereals (group I) are WGR

The steps below show how to determine if cooked breakfast cereals meet the WGR criteria in the preschool meal patterns.

1. Does the breakfast cereal meet the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document) or is the breakfast cereal on the list of breakfast cereals for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?
  - Yes: Go to step 2.
  - No: The cereal is not WGR.
2. Is the first ingredient a whole grain or is the cereal 100 percent whole grain (all grains are whole grains)? Refer to “[Whole-grain breakfast cereals](#)” in this document.
  - Yes: The cereal is WGR.
  - No: Go to step 3.
3. Does the breakfast cereal’s PFS indicate that whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight? Refer to “[Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document.
  - Yes: The cereal is WGR.
  - No: The cereal is not WGR.



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### Steps to determine if cooked breakfast cereals (group H) are WGR

The steps below show how to determine if cooked breakfast cereals meet the WGR criteria in the preschool meal patterns.

1. Does the breakfast cereal meet the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document) or is the breakfast cereal on the list of breakfast cereals for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?
  - Yes: Go to step 2.
  - No: The cereal is not WGR.
2. Is the first ingredient a whole grain? Refer to “[Whole-grain breakfast cereals](#)” in this document.
  - Yes: Go to step 3.
  - No: The cereal is not WGR.
3. Does the cereal have a second grain ingredient?
  - Yes: Go to step 4.
  - No: The cereal is WGR.
4. Is the second grain ingredient creditable?
  - Yes: Go to step 5.
  - No: Go to step 7.
5. Does the cereal have a third grain ingredient?
  - Yes: Go to step 6.
  - No: The cereal is WGR.
6. Is the third grain ingredient creditable?
  - Yes: The cereal is WGR.
  - No: Go to step 7.
7. Is the noncreditable grain listed after “contains 2% or less”? Refer to “[Noncreditable grains](#)” in this document).
  - Yes: The cereal is WGR.
  - No: The cereal is not WGR.

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## How to Determine if Commercial Breakfast Cereals are Creditable

This section contains five examples of how to evaluate commercial RTE and cooked breakfast cereals for compliance with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria for breakfast cereals. Whole grains are indicated in **bold** text (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). Noncreditable grains (such as wheat flour and yellow corn flour) are indicated in *italicized* text. Depending on the type of breakfast cereal, noncreditable grains are included or ignored when determining WGR compliance.

- **Cooked breakfast cereals (group H), e.g., oatmeal:** Menu planners must include noncreditable grains when reviewing a cooked breakfast cereal for compliance with the CACFP Rule of Three WGR criteria, unless they are listed after the statement “contains 2% or less” or in the sublisting for a non-grain ingredient such as a dough conditioner.
- **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** Menu planners can ignore all noncreditable grains if a whole grain is the first ingredient and the cereal is fortified.

Cooked breakfast cereals are creditable if: 1) the first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Cooked breakfast cereals are WGR if the first ingredient is a whole grain and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable.

RTE breakfast cereals are creditable if: 1) the first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, **or** the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit.

The serving of a creditable or WGR breakfast cereal must provide the required weight or volume (refer to “[Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document).

## Crediting worksheets for breakfast cereals

The preschool meal pattern requirements for breakfast cereals are the same as the CACFP. SFAs may use the CSDE’s CACFP crediting worksheets to evaluate breakfast cereals for compliance with the preschool crediting requirements and WGR criteria.

- Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP
- Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP

These worksheets are available in the “[Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.



# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Product 1: Spiced instant oatmeal (commercial cooked breakfast cereal)

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Ingredients: **Whole-grain rolled oats**, sugar, salt, cinnamon and other spices, calcium carbonate, guar gum, caramel color, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin A palmitate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, thiamin mononitrate, folic acid.

### Part 1: Grain ingredients

- A. **First ingredient:** Whole-grain rolled oats
- B. **Second grain ingredient:** None
- C. **Third grain ingredient:** None
- D. **Fortification nutrients:** Calcium carbonate, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin A palmitate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, thiamin mononitrate, folic acid.

### Part 2: Preschool crediting criteria for group H (cooked breakfast cereals)

**Crediting requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- The first ingredient is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1A above).
- The cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1D above).

This cooked breakfast cereal is creditable if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

### Part 3: Preschool Rule of Three WGR criteria for group H (cooked breakfast cereals)

**WGR requirements:** The first ingredient is a whole grain and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable.

1. The first ingredient is a whole grain (refer to Part 1A above).  
 Yes    No
2. The second grain ingredient (if any) is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1B above).  
 Yes    No    Not applicable (no second grain ingredient or can be ignored)
3. The third grain ingredient (if any) is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1C above).  
 Yes    No    Not applicable (no third grain ingredient or can be ignored)

This cooked breakfast cereal is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

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## Product 2: Farina hot cereal (commercial cooked breakfast cereal)

Ingredients: *Wheat farina*, calcium carbonate, ferric orthophosphate (source of iron), niacinamide (vitamin B3), pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B6), folic acid, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1) riboflavin (vitamin B2).

### Part 1: Grain ingredients

- A. **First ingredient:** Wheat farina (noncreditable grain)
- B. **Second grain ingredient:** None
- C. **Third grain ingredient:** None
- D. **Fortification nutrients:** Calcium carbonate, ferric orthophosphate (source of iron), niacinamide (vitamin B3), pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B6), folic acid, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1) riboflavin (vitamin B2)

### Part 2: Preschool crediting criteria for group H (cooked breakfast cereals)

**Crediting requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- The first ingredient is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1A above).
- The cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1D above).

This cooked breakfast cereal is creditable if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

### Part 3: Preschool Rule of Three WGR criteria for group H (cooked breakfast cereals)

**WGR requirements:** The first ingredient is a whole grain and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable.

- 1. The first ingredient is a whole grain (refer to Part 1A above).
  - Yes  No
- 2. The second grain ingredient (if any) is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1B above).
  - Yes  No  Not applicable (no second grain ingredient or can be ignored)
- 3. The third grain ingredient (if any) is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1C above).
  - Yes  No  Not applicable (no third grain ingredient or can be ignored)

This cooked breakfast cereal does not contain any whole grains. It is not WGR but may credit as an enriched grain if meets the sugar limit (refer to Part 2 above).

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Product 3: Whole-grain oat cereal (commercial RTE breakfast cereal)

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Ingredients: **Whole-grain oat flour**, sugar, *corn flour*, **whole-wheat flour**, *rice flour*, salt, calcium carbonate, disodium phosphate, reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide, BHT (a preservative), yellow 5, yellow 6, thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid.

### Part 1: Grain ingredients

- A. **First ingredient:** Whole- grain oat flour
- B. **Fortification nutrients:** Calcium carbonate, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin A palmitate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, thiamin mononitrate, folic acid.

### Part 2: Preschool crediting criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**Crediting requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- The first ingredient is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1A above).
- The cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).

This RTE breakfast cereal is creditable if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

### Part 3: Preschool WGR criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**WGR requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, **or** the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit. Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- A whole grain is the first ingredient (refer to Part 1A above) and the cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).
- The cereal is 100 percent whole grain (all grains are whole grains).

This RTE breakfast cereal is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Product 4: Crispy rice cereal (commercial RTE breakfast cereal)

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Ingredients: *Rice*, sugar, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. BHT added to packaging for freshness. Vitamins and Minerals: Iron, vitamin C (ascorbic acid), vitamin E (alpha tocopherol acetate), niacinamide, vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), folic acid, vitamin B12, vitamin D.

### Part 1: Grain ingredients

- A. **First ingredient:** Rice (noncreditable grain)
- B. **Fortification nutrients:** Iron, vitamin C (ascorbic acid), vitamin E (alpha tocopherol acetate), niacinamide, vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), folic acid, vitamin B12, vitamin D

### Part 2: Preschool crediting criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**Crediting requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- The first ingredient is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1A above).
- The cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).

This RTE breakfast cereal is creditable if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

### Part 3: Preschool WGR criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**WGR requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, **or** the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit. Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- A whole grain is the first ingredient (refer to Part 1A above) and the cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).
- The cereal is 100 percent whole grain (all grains are whole grains).

This RTE breakfast cereal does not contain any whole grains. It is not WGR but may credit as an enriched grain if meets the sugar limit (refer to Part 2 above).

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Product 5: Crunchy wheat cereal (commercial RTE breakfast cereal)

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Ingredients: **Whole-grain wheat**, sugar, *rice flour*, *oat fiber*, sunflower oil, dextrose, molasses, baking soda, sea salt.

### Part 1: Grain ingredients

- A. **First ingredient:** Whole-grain wheat
- B. **Fortification nutrients:** None

### Part 2: Preschool crediting criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**Crediting requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit (refer to “[Sugar Limit](#)” in this document). Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- The first ingredient is a creditable grain (refer to Part 1A above).
- The cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).

This RTE breakfast cereal is creditable if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

### Part 3: Preschool WGR criteria for group I (RTE breakfast cereals)

**WGR requirements:** 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, **or** the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) the cereal meets the sugar limit. Read the ingredients statement and check all that apply.

- A whole grain is the first ingredient (refer to Part 1A above) and the cereal is fortified (refer to Part 1B above).
- The cereal is 100 percent whole grain (all grains are whole grains).

This RTE breakfast cereal is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food if meets the sugar limit. The menu planner uses the Nutrition Facts label to determine if this cereal meets the sugar limit.

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

## Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals

The required quantities for RTE and cooked breakfast cereals are in oz eq. The minimum amount that toward the grains component is  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz eq. The chart below shows the required preschool meal pattern servings for each age group.

Exhibit A group	Type of cereal	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq for ages 1-2	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq for ages 3-5
H	Cooked hot	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked or 14 grams ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce) dry	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked or 14 grams ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce) dry
I	RTE flakes or rounds	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
I	RTE puffed	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
I	RTE granola	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup

## Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries, and hard chunks (such as granola) may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what types of breakfast cereals to offer in preschool menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

## Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/accepting\\_processed\\_product\\_documentation\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_snp.pdf)

Approved Food Guide for Connecticut WIC (Connecticut Department of Public Health):  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/WIC/Approved-Food-Guide>

CACFP Training Tools (USDA):  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/training-tools-cacfp>

Calculating Sugar Limits for Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-breakfast-cereals-cacfp>

## Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain\\_calculation\\_snp\\_preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain_calculation_snp_preschool.pdf)

Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/cacfp\\_child\\_care\\_worksheet2\\_crediting\\_rte\\_breakfast\\_cereals.xlsx](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/cacfp_child_care_worksheet2_crediting_rte_breakfast_cereals.xlsx)

Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/cacfp\\_child\\_care\\_worksheet3\\_crediting\\_cooked\\_cereals.xlsx](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/cacfp_child_care_worksheet3_crediting_cooked_cereals.xlsx)

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-safety-for-child-nutrition-programs/documents/#ChokingPrevention>

Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-breakfast-cereals-are-lower-sugar>

Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit\\_enriched\\_grains\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_enriched_grains_snp.pdf)

Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit\\_whole\\_grains\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_whole_grains_snp.pdf)

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/grain\\_oz\\_eq\\_snp\\_preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/grain_oz_eq_snp_preschool.pdf)

Grains Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/related-resources#Grains>

Guide to Meeting the Preschool Meal Patterns and Crediting Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/guide\\_preschool\\_meal\\_patterns\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/guide_preschool_meal_patterns_snp.pdf)

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/wgr\\_requirement\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/wgr_requirement_cacfp.pdf)



## Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/identify\\_creditable\\_grains\\_snp\\_preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/identify_creditable_grains_snp_preschool.pdf)

Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs>

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/resources\\_preschool\\_meal\\_patterns.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/resources_preschool_meal_patterns.pdf)

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):  
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

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>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/product\\_formulation\\_statements.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/product_formulation_statements.pdf)

Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp>

What's in a Meal Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):  
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when\\_commercial\\_grain\\_products\\_require\\_pfs\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_snp.pdf)

## Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) or [Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus](#) webpages or contact the [school nutrition programs 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/nslp/crediting/credit\\_cereals\\_snp\\_preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_cereals_snp_preschool.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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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