

# Identifying Products that Meet the USDA’s Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs

This document indicates how to determine if commercial products credit as fluid milk substitutes in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the school nutrition programs. The school nutrition programs include the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP, [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP, [Special Milk Program \(SMP\)](#), and [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) At-risk Supper Program](#) implemented in schools. The guidance in this document applies to all public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the school nutrition programs.

The guidance in this document does not apply to fluid milk substitutes for children whose disability restricts their diet. For detailed guidance on the meal modification requirements for disability reasons, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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## Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs

The USDA allows school food authorities (SFAs) to offer fluid milk substitutes for children who do not consume regular cow's milk due to non-disability reasons. These fluid milk substitutes must comply with the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ([7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(3\)](#)). Beverages that do not meet these requirements cannot be served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks unless the child has a medically documented disability that specifically requires this substitution. For detailed guidance on the USDA's requirements for fluid milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

**Fluid milk substitutes** are plant-based beverages designed to replace cow's milk, such as soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, and oat milk. Fluid milk substitutes must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. SFAs may offer allowable fluid milk substitutes as a replacement for cow's milk in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks for children who do not consume milk due to non-disability reasons. Only certain brands of fluid milk substitutes meet the USDA's standards.

### Required Documentation for Fluid Milk Substitutes

SFAs must have documentation on file to claim reimbursement for meals and afterschool snacks that contain fluid milk substitutes. Prior to providing a fluid milk substitute for a non-disability reason, SFAs must obtain a written request that identifies the reason for the milk substitute from one of the following:

- the child's parent or guardian;
- a state licensed healthcare professional, i.e., physician (MD), physician assistant (PA) and certified physician assistant (PAC), doctors of osteopath (DO), and advanced practice registered nurse (APRN); or
- a registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN).

For example, a parent may submit a written request for an allowable brand of soy milk because her child is a vegetarian. Schools and institutions must maintain all requests for fluid milk substitutes on file with children's other medical records.

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## Instructions for Identifying Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes

Use the chart on page 3 ([Comparison Chart: Meeting the USDA's Nutrition Standards](#)) to enter the product's information in column 4, then complete column 5 to determine if the fluid milk substitute complies with each standard.

- **Column 1** indicates the minimum nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces) for the eight required nutrients of the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes.
- **Column 2** indicates the unrounded Daily Value (% DV) for each nutrient. The unrounded % DV is the current daily value for each nutrient indicated in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) [Reference Guide: Daily Values for Nutrients](#).
- **Column 3** indicates the rounded percent % DV for each nutrient. The rounded % DV is based on the FDA labeling laws (refer to Appendix H of the FDA's [A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry](#)). It is listed on the Nutrition Facts label and indicates how each nutrient in the serving contributes to a daily diet of 2,000 calories.
- **Column 4:** Enter the nutrients per cup or % DV from the Nutrition Facts label or manufacturer's nutrient analysis. **Note:** Product information might list nutrient values, % DV (unrounded or rounded), or both. If any nutrient values are missing, the SFA must obtain this information from the manufacturer.
- **Column 5:** Check "yes" or "no" to indicate if the product meets each nutrient standard (either the nutrients per cup in column 1 or the unrounded % DV in column 2 or the rounded % DV in column 3). If all "yes" boxes are checked, the product is an allowable fluid milk substitute. Submit information to the CSDE so compliant products may be added to the list of allowable products (refer to list 17 of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage).

**Additional requirements:** In addition to meeting the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, fluid milk substitutes must also comply with the applicable requirements below.

- Fluid milk substitutes for the preschool meal patterns (ages 1-5) must be unflavored.
- Fluid milk substitutes sold in public schools must meet the state beverage requirements for nondairy milk substitutes under [Section 10-221q](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes. They cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat, and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.

To be an allowable fluid milk substitute, a commercial product must meet each nutrient standard (either the nutrients per cup in column 1 or the unrounded or rounded % DV in column 2). Check that the product also meets the additional requirements for the preschool meal patterns and public schools indicated above.

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## Comparison Chart: Meeting the USDA's Nutrition Standards

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
<b>USDA requirements: Minimum nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces)</b>	<b>Unrounded % DV <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rounded % DV <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Product information <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Meets nutrient standard in column 2 or 3</b>
Calcium: 276 milligrams (mg)	21.23%	20%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Protein: 8 grams (g)	16%	16%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Vitamin A: 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalent (RAE)	16.67%	20%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Vitamin D: 2.5 micrograms (mcg)	12.5%	15%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Magnesium: 24 mg	5.71%	6%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Phosphorus: 222 mg	17.76%	20%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Potassium: 349 mg	7.43%	10%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Riboflavin: 0.44 mg	33.85%	35%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Vitamin B12: 1.1 mcg	45.83%	45%		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

- <sup>1</sup> The unrounded % DV is the minimum nutrients per cup divided by the current daily value for each nutrient (refer to the FDA's [Reference Guide: Daily Values for Nutrients](#)).
- <sup>2</sup> The rounded % DV is based on the FDA labeling laws and is listed on the Nutrition Facts label (refer to Appendix H of the FDA's [A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry](#)).
- <sup>3</sup> Indicate the product's nutrients per cup or % DV (either unrounded or rounded). The manufacturer's product information might list nutrient values, % DV, or both.

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## Resources

A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry (FDA):

<https://www.fda.gov/media/81606/download>

Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/milk\\_substitutes\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_snp.pdf)

Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/special\\_diets\\_guide\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/special_diets_guide_snp.pdf)

List 17 Beverages – Dairy Alternatives (CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/fblast/acceptablefoodslist17.pdf>

Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents/#MilkSubstitutes>

Module 7: Milk Component (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>

NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10(d)(2): Fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons (USDA):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10\(d\)\(2\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10(d)(2))

Reference Guide: Daily Values for Nutrients (FDA):

<https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/daily-value-nutrition-and-supplement-facts-labels>

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<http://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs>

USDA Final Rule (73 FR 52903): Fluid Milk Substitutions in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-091208>

USDA Final Rule (81 FR 33742): Food Labeling: Revision of the Nutrition and Supplement Facts Labels:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/05/27/2016-11867/food-labeling-revision-of-the-nutrition-and-supplement-facts-labels>

USDA Memo SP 02-2009: Final Fluid Milk Substitution Rule:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/final-fluid-milk-substitution-rule>

USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs>

## Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs

For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage 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/specdiet/identify\\_allowable\\_nondairy\\_milk\\_substitutes\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/identify_allowable_nondairy_milk_substitutes_snp.pdf).

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
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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