



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 fruit and vegetables: Schools must offer fruits and vegetables with every lunch, and students must take a minimum of one half-cup serving. Vegetable choices for lunch must include weekly offerings of legumes, dark green and red or orange vegetables. Starting July 2014, schools must offer a full cup of fruit/vegetables with breakfast and students must take a minimum of one half-cup serving.

Whole grains: Half of all grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich (51% whole grain), and by July 2014, all grains must be whole grain-rich.

Sodium limits: Schools must gradually reduce sodium levels in school meals over a ten year period. Sodium limits vary by age group. For a sodium reduction timeline, [click here](#).

Calorie limits: School meals must meet age-appropriate calorie minimums and maximums. These calorie ranges are:

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

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 choices 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.

Limits on grains and protein now lifted: The updated nutrition standards included weekly limits on the amount of grains and proteins served with school meals. These limits prompted complaints from some students concerned that school meals were no longer adequate to keep hunger at bay. USDA has now permanently lifted these limits.

Source: School Nutrition Association

