



# Nutrition Standards for School Meals

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 required the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update federal nutrition standards for school meals. The [updated rules](#) went into effect on July 1, 2012. Since that time, USDA [adjusted](#) whole grain, sodium and milk mandates. The current standards require:

**More fruits and vegetables:** Schools offer students larger portions of fruits and vegetables with every lunch. Vegetable choices must include weekly offerings of legumes, dark green and red/orange vegetables. Every school breakfast must offer students a full cup of fruits or vegetables. Students are required to take at least one half-cup serving of fruits or vegetables with every school breakfast and lunch.

**Whole grains:** At least half of the grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich (at least 51% whole grain).

**Calorie limits:** School meals must meet age-appropriate calorie minimums and maximums:

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

**Sodium limits:** Schools must gradually reduce sodium levels in school meals to meet the following limits.

## Sodium Reduction Target Timeline for School Meals

Grades	Target 1 (July 1, 2014)	Target 2 (July 1, 2024)
School Breakfast Program		
K-5:	≤540 mg	≤485 mg
6-8:	≤600	≤535
9-12:	≤640	≤570
National School Lunch Program		
K-5:	≤1,230	≤935
6-8:	≤1,360	≤1,035
9-12:	≤1,420	≤1,080

**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. 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.