

A close-up photograph of milk being poured from a white container into a clear glass. The milk is captured mid-pour, creating a dynamic splash with white foam and bubbles. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A large blue rounded rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the page title.

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Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

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Fluid Milk Component for the Child Nutrition Programs

Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs require that fluid milk be offered at each breakfast, lunch, or supper meal service. The fluid milk may be served as a beverage, on cereal, or both; however, in a lunch or a supper meal, the fluid milk must be served as a beverage. Program operators have the option to serve fluid milk as one of the two components of a snack served in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Afterschool Snack Service. Contact your State agency for additional guidance regarding milk options.

Fluid milk means pasteurized unflavored or flavored milk, whole milk, reduced fat milk (2%), low fat (1%), lactose free milk, lactose reduced milk, buttermilk, and acidified milk, all of which meet State and local standards for such milk. The milk must contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and must be consistent with State and local standards.



School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

School food authorities must offer at least two different options of fluid milk. Milk (flavored or unflavored) must be fat-free or low fat (1% fat or less).

Low fat or fat-free lactose-free and reduced-lactose fluid milk may also be offered. Fat-free or low-fat buttermilk, and fat-free or low-fat acidified milk are also allowed. Such products must be pasteurized fluid milk that meets State and local standards.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

Fluid milk varieties allowed for the Summer Food Service Program include unflavored or flavored: whole milk, reduced-fat milk (2%), low-fat milk (1%), fat-free milk, lactose free milk, lactose reduced milk, buttermilk, or acidophilus milk.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

One-Year-Old Children

Children who are 1 year of age must be served unflavored whole milk. Breastmilk is considered an allowable fluid milk substitute for children of any age if a mother chooses to breastfeed her child past 1 year of age.

Children Two Years Old and Older and Adults

Allowable types of fluid milk for children 2 years old and older and adults include: low-fat or fat-free milk, low-fat or fat-free lactose reduced milk, low-fat or fat-free lactose free milk, low-fat or fat-free buttermilk, or low-fat or fat-free acidified milk. Milk must be pasteurized fluid milk that meets State and local standards. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk may not be served to participants 2 years of age and older and adults. Children 24 months to 25 months who are served meals that contain whole milk or reduced-fat milk (2%) may be claimed for reimbursement. Fat-free flavored milk is also creditable for children 6 years and older and adults.

Breastmilk is considered an allowable fluid milk substitute for children of any age if a mother chooses to breastfeed her child past 1 year of age.

Flavored Milk

Children 1 through 5 Years Old

- Flavored fluid milk and flavored non-dairy beverages cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

Children 6 Years Old and Older and Adults

- Flavored fluid milk served to children 6 years old and older and adults must be fat-free.

Fluid milk used in smoothies can credit toward the fluid milk component requirement. Remember, plan at least 1 cup fluid milk; when a smoothie contains less than 1 cup milk per portion, additional fluid milk must be offered. The minimum creditable amount of milk is 1/4 cup. Milk used in preparation of menu items other than smoothies does not credit toward the fluid milk requirement.

Non-Dairy Beverages

Nondairy beverages offered as fluid milk substitutes may also be offered in the NSLP, SBP, and CACFP. However, they must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and provide specific levels of calcium, protein, vitamins A and D, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, riboflavin, and vitamin B-12. For more information about fluid milk for children whose non-disabling allergies, culture, religion, or ethical beliefs preclude the consumption of cow's milk, please see program guidance.