

Feeding Infants



This handout covers information about offering the CACFP to infants and claiming infant meals. The term *Program* refers to the following facility types: group child care centers, family day care homes and emergency shelters.



New Requirements Effective October 1, 2017

Updated Infant Age Groups*:

- Birth through 5 months
- 6 months through 11 months

**This change may not be implemented before October 1, 2017*

Additional Infant Meal Pattern Changes:

- Meals are reimbursed when a mother breastfeeds on-site. This includes meals when an infant is only consuming breastmilk
- Yogurt and whole eggs are allowable meat alternates
- Ready-to-eat cereals may be served at snack
- Requires a vegetable or fruit, or both, be served at snack for infants 6 - 11 months old when developmentally ready
- Juice, cheese food or cheese spread are not allowable
- Parents/guardians may provide only **one** meal component

What can you start doing now?

Items under **Additional Infant Meal Pattern Changes**, above, may be implemented now.



Offering Infant Meals

All infants enrolled in a CACFP Program must be offered meals that comply with the CACFP infant meal pattern requirements. A Program may not avoid this obligation by stating that the infant is not "enrolled" in the CACFP, or by citing logistical or cost barriers to offering infant meals.



Promote Breastfeeding

Support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants by encouraging them to supply breastmilk while their infant is in care, and offer a quiet, private area that is comfortable and sanitary when they breastfeed on-site. For more information on how to promote breastfeeding, refer to the [Ten Steps for Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers](#) resource kit.

Parent Provided Foods

Parents or guardians may provide only one of the meal components in the updated CACFP infant meal patterns.

Breastmilk or Formula Only

When the infant is only consuming breastmilk or infant formula, a parent/guardian may supply expressed breastmilk, a creditable infant formula, or directly breastfeed on-site and the meal will be reimbursable.



Consuming Solid Foods

When an infant is developmentally ready to consume solid foods and the parent/guardian chooses to supply expressed breastmilk, a creditable infant formula, or directly breastfeed on-site, then the **Program must provide all the other required meal components in order for the meal to be reimbursable.**



Alternatively, a parent/guardian may choose to provide a solid food component if the infant is developmentally ready to consume solid foods. In this situation, the **Program must provide all the other required meal components, including iron-fortified infant formula, in order for the meal to be reimbursable.**

Q&A

Why are parents/guardians no longer allowed to provide more than one of the meal components for infants in the updated infant meal patterns?

This change was made to help maintain the integrity of the CACFP and help ensure that Programs are not encouraging or requiring parents/guardians to supply the food in order to reduce costs.

Solid Foods (Complimentary Foods)

Introduction of Solid Foods

The updated infant age groups will help delay the introduction of solid foods until around 6 months of age as most infants are typically not physically developed to consume solid foods until this time. Six to 8 months of age is a critical window for introducing solid foods to infants. By 7 to 8 months of age, infants should be consuming solid foods from all food groups (vegetables, fruits, grains, protein foods, and dairy).



Developmentally Ready

Infants develop at different rates - meaning some infants may be ready to consume solid foods before 6 months of age and others may be ready after 6 months of age. **Once an infant is developmentally ready to accept solid foods, including infants younger than 6 months, Programs are required to offer them to the infant.**

Summary of Component Changes

Component	Change
Vegetables and Fruits	A vegetable, fruit, or a combination of both must be served at snack for infants developmentally ready to accept them.
	Juice cannot be served to infants.
Grains	Ready-to-eat cereals can be served at snack for infants developmentally ready to accept them. Cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.
Meat and Meat Alternates	Yogurt and whole eggs can be served for infants developmentally ready to accept them. Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounce.
	Cheese food or cheese spread cannot be served to infants.

Q&A

Are foods that are considered to be a major food allergen (milk, egg, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans), or foods that contain these major food allergens, allowed for infant meals?

Yes, foods that contain one or more of the major food allergens are appropriate for infants and can be part of a reimbursable meal. With this in mind, it is good practice to check with parents/guardians to learn about any concerns of possible allergies and their preference on how solid foods are introduced.

For More Information

Refer to USDA Policy Memo: [CACFP 23-2016](#)

New foods may be introduced one at a time over a few days, and an infant's eating patterns may change. For example, an infant may eat a cracker one week and not the next.



Follow the Eating Habits of Infants

To claim a meal for an infant, all required components of that meal do not have to be served at the same time. As long as all the required food components are offered during a period of time that is considered the meal time, the meals may be claimed for reimbursement.



Updated Infant Age Groups

Breakfast Lunch and Supper	
Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
4-6 fl oz. breastmilk or formula	6-8 fl oz. breastmilk or formula; and 0-4 T infant cereal, meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, or cooked dry peas; or 0-2 oz. of cheese; or 0-4 oz. (volume) of cottage cheese; or 0-8 oz. or 1 cup of yogurt; or a combination of the above; and 0-2 T vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both

Snack	
Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
4-6 fl oz. breastmilk or formula	2-4 fl oz. breastmilk or formula; and 0-½ slice bread; or 0-2 crackers; or 0-4 T infant cereal or ready-to-eat breakfast cereal; and 0-2 T vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both

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