

OSPI Child and Adult Care Food Program Reference Sheet

Infant Feeding— Meal Requirements

Infants have unique nutritional and developmental needs. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) has a separate meal pattern for infants. For the CACFP, infants are defined as those from birth through 11 months of age, per the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Infant feeding requirements apply to participants through the infant's 11th month of age.

Requirements and Best Practices

✓ Infant Meal Pattern

- Must be followed for all infants
- Must meet developmental readiness for the individual infant
- Creditable foods must be offered
- The specific amount and type of food required for reimbursable meals changes as infants get older, so infants are grouped into two age categories:
 - Birth through 5 months
 - 6 months through 11 months

✓ Reimbursable Meals and Snacks

Infant meals and snacks must contain breast milk or approved iron-fortified infant formula; or both. These items may be supplied by the caregiver or parent.

- Formula or breast milk mixed into infant cereal is **not** credited toward meeting the minimum portion size of formula or breast milk required for the meal pattern.
- Breast milk
 - "Expressed" breastmilk is offered by staff from a bottle.
 - Must be labeled with the infant's name and the date the milk was collected.
 - Identified for a particular infant and must only be served to that infant.
 - The mother breastfeeds her infant on site.
- Iron-Fortified Infant Formula
 - Institutions must offer to provide at least one formula to infants who are not breast-fed, or when a supplement is needed for breast-fed infants.
 - Must be iron fortified.
 - Formula served cannot be an exempt formula unless there is a documented medical need: [FDA Exempt Infant Formulas List](#).



- It is the parent's decision to accept or decline the offered formula.
- If the facility changes the offered formula, they must notify all parents/guardians of infants so the parents/guardians can decide if the new formula is acceptable for their infant

✓ Creditable Foods for Infants

- Iron-fortified infant cereal or Meat/Meat Alternates must be offered and served with a spoon.
- Ready to eat cereals:
 - Only creditable for snacks
 - Must meet the sugar limits
 - Must be iron fortified
 - Must be made with enriched or whole-grain meal or flour or be fortified
 - Must **not** include nuts, dried fruits, or other hard food items
- Yogurt **must**:
 - Be store-bought and pasteurized low-fat, reduced-fat, or whole milk
 - Only served to infants 6–11 months
 - Meet the sugar limits; this includes soy yogurt
- Combination commercial infant foods **must** have one of the following:
 - Food packaging—the manufacturer has listed the amounts of each component on the combination container.
 - A Product Formulation Statement on file.
 - If ingredient list has percentages listed, the Food Buying Guide may be used to determine the amount that may be credited toward the meal pattern.
- **Non-creditable** infant foods include:
 - Breaded/battered fish, canned fish with bones, meat sticks, hot dogs, and sausages
 - Nuts and seeds and their butters (such as peanut butter)
 - Fruit and vegetable juices, even 100%
 - Home-canned infant foods
 - Honey
 - Cow's milk
 - Baby food desserts such as baby puddings, custards, cobblers, and fruit desserts

✓ Mealtimes and Service

- Infant meals must be served consistent with their eating habits; infants should be "fed on demand"
- Infants who regularly do not consume all required components at one sitting may be offered the remainder of the required components at subsequent sittings

Reference

- [7 CFR 226.20 \(b\)](#)
- [21 CFR part 106](#)
- [21 CFR part 107](#)
- [CACFP01-2019](#)
- [CACFP02-2024](#)
- [CACFP06-2025](#)
- [SP01-2018](#)

Resources

- [Infant Meal Pattern Chart](#)
- [CACFP Program Requirements and Forms Webpage](#)
- [Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)
- [Crediting Store-bought Baby Foods In the CACFP](#)
- [Infant Meals Training](#)
- [Feeding Infants in the CACFP Handbook](#)
- [Guidelines on Storing, Handling and Feeding Breast Milk](#)
- [Infant Feeding- Recordkeeping Reference Sheet](#)
- [Infant Feeding- Special Dietary Needs Reference Sheet](#)
- [Resources for Child Care Providers and Parents](#)
- [USDA FNS Feeding Infants Resources](#)

Acronym Reference

- CNS – Child Nutrition Services
- CACFP – Child and Adult Care Food Program
- OSPI – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- USDA – United States Department of Agriculture