

# Bag Lunches in Child Care Centers and Preschools

When planning your child's bag lunch, please keep in mind these guidelines which must be followed by the center, in order to comply with child care state licensing:

- Child care center licensing requires that bag lunches brought to the center must provide one-third the child's daily nutritional needs as specified by the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.
- If a child's meal does not contain all required components, the child care center must provide them, in order to remain in compliance with licensing.

Please refer to the following **Child Care Meal Pattern** established by the USDA when preparing your child's lunch. **Each lunch must contain all of the 5 components listed.**

Food Components and Food Items <sup>1</sup>	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Fluid Milk<sup>3</sup></b> - WE PROVIDE	4 fluid ounces	6 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces
<b>Meat/meat alternate</b> Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 ounce	1 ½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Tofu <sup>4</sup>	¼ cup	¾ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Cheese	1 ounce	1 ½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Cottage cheese	2 ounces or ¼ cup	3 ounces or ¾ cup	4 ounces or ½ cup	4 ounces or ½ cup
Large egg	½	¾	1	1
Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	¾ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter or soy nut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons	4 tablespoons	4 tablespoons
Yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened <sup>5</sup>	4 ounces or ½ cup	6 ounces or ¾ cup	8 ounces or 1 cup	8 ounces or 1 cup
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds <sup>11</sup>	½ ounce = 50%	¾ ounce = 50%	1 ounce = 50%	1 ounce = 50%
<b>Vegetables<sup>6</sup></b>	⅓ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
<b>Fruits<sup>6,7</sup></b>	⅓ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
<b>Grains<sup>8,9</sup></b>				
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal <sup>10</sup> , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup

<sup>1</sup>Must serve all five components for a reimbursable meal. Offer versus serve is an option for only at-risk afterschool participants.

<sup>2</sup>At-Risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters. Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

<sup>3</sup>Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older and adults.

<sup>4</sup>Tofu must contain five grams of protein per 2.2 ounces (¼ cup).

<sup>5</sup>Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

<sup>6</sup>Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

<sup>7</sup>A vegetable may be used to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.

<sup>8</sup>At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement.

<sup>9</sup>Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of the creditable grain.

<sup>10</sup>Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

<sup>11</sup>One ounce of nuts/seeds provides one ounce meat/meat alternate. Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch or supper requirement.

Source: USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program 2016, MN Department of Education Child Meal Pattern.