

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## The Basics of the Meats/Meat Alternates Component

Compliance | CACFP Meal Pattern

**Purpose:** This handout provides the basic factors of the meats/meat alternates component for children in the CACFP.

Meats/meat alternates provide protein, iron, B vitamins, and other nutrients. The protein found in these foods serves as the building blocks for muscles, bones, skin, and blood.

### Meats/Meat Alternates

- Meat options include lean meat, poultry, or fish.
- The creditable quantity of meats/meat alternates must be the edible portion.
- Meat alternates such as cheese, eggs, yogurt, and nut butters may be used to meet all or a portion of the component.

### Tofu and Soy Products

- Commercial tofu may be used to meet all or a portion of the component as long as it follows FNS guidance.
- Noncommercial and nonstandardized tofu and soy products are not creditable.
- Commercial tofu must be easily recognized as a meat alternate. It also must contain 5 grams of protein per 2.2 ounces (1/4 cup) to equal 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternate.

### Yogurt

- Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.
- Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.
- Noncommercial or non-standardized yogurt products are not creditable food items. Some common examples include frozen yogurt, drinkable yogurt products, homemade yogurt, or yogurt bars.

### Beans and Peas (Legumes)

- Cooked dry beans and peas may be used to meet all or part of the component.
- Beans and peas may be credited as a meat/meat alternate or as a vegetable, but not as both in the same meal.

### Nuts, Seeds, and Nut Butters

- For lunch and supper, nuts and seeds may be used to meet half (1/2) of the component. They must be combined with other meats/meat alternates to meet the full requirement for a reimbursable meal.
- Nut butter and seed butters may be used to meet the entire requirement.
- Nut and seed meal or flour may be used only if they meet the requirements for alternate protein products.
- Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts are non-creditable meat alternates because of their low protein and iron content.

### References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *CACFP meal pattern requirements training*. University, MS: Author.

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