

MICRO-TRAINING



PLANNING REIMBURSABLE SCHOOL MEALS FOR MENU PLANNERS: SODIUM REQUIREMENTS

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Key Area: Nutrition (1000)

USDA Professional Standard: Menu Planning (1100)

Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills (CKS): Functional Area 7:

Menu and Nutrition Management

2023

Institute of Child Nutrition

The University of Mississippi

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the Institute of Child Nutrition at the University of Mississippi. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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Institute of Child Nutrition. (2023). *Planning reimbursable school meals for menu planners: Sodium requirements*. University, MS: Author.

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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Key Area: Nutrition (1000)

USDA Professional Standard: Menu Planning (1100)

Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills (CKS): Functional Area 7: Menu and Nutrition Management

INTRODUCTION

Planning Reimbursable School Meals for Menu Planners: Sodium Requirements is one of four micro-trainings designed for use by program operators/menu planners to train their staff. These short (less than 30 minutes) and easy-to-use trainings include a lesson plan and activities related to the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium – [Final Rule](#).

This lesson plan contains the following:

- Learning objectives
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- Additional resources to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the menu planners and other program staff

LESSON: SODIUM STANDARD

Objectives:

- Describe the sodium requirements for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).
- Identify food items that are commonly found on school menus that are higher in sodium.

Outcome:

Provide menu planners an overview of the sodium requirement for the NSLP and SBP.

Why It Is Important:

It is critical that program operators/menu planners understand and can implement the menu requirements for the NSLP and SBP.

Materials:

- Sodium Standard Lesson Overview
- Sodium: Transitional Standards for School Years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 infographic
- Menu Planning – Sodium Standard worksheet
- Speed Action Planning worksheet
- Pens/pencils
- Planner or cell phone calendar

Instructions:

Follow these steps to complete this training:

- Discuss the lesson overview with the participants.
- Review the infographic and how it relates to the training topic.
- Complete the discussion questions.
- Complete the activity as instructed.
- Answer any questions participants may have about the lesson.
- Encourage participants to complete the Speed Action Planning activity.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Sodium is an essential nutrient that our bodies need in certain amounts. Sodium, also known as salt, is often added to foods during processing, cooking, or at the table. While the body needs some sodium, almost everyone eats more than the body needs. Too much sodium plays a role in high blood pressure, which makes it harder for the heart to do its job.

Schools are an important player in overall national efforts to reduce the amount of sodium that people eat. As such, schools participating in the NSLP and SBP will continue to reduce the amount of sodium in meals by choosing lower-sodium versions of foods and flavoring foods with spices and herbs. For more information on how to incorporate herbs and spices, visit the [Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition](#).

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025* recommends that adults and high school-age students limit their sodium consumption to less than 2,300 mg (that’s approximately one teaspoon of salt) per day. Preschool and elementary-aged school children should consume even less sodium! (1,500–1,800 mg). Students consume sodium throughout the day from multiple foods and locations, including school cafeterias. Therefore, as a school nutrition operator or menu planner, you play an important role in reducing sodium intake among students.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost half (48%) of the sodium in children’s diets comes from the following foods or mixed dishes:

- Breads, rolls, and tortillas
- Burritos and tacos
- Cheese
- Deli/cured meats (luncheon/sandwich meat, ham, and sausage)
- Pizza
- Poultry (chicken patties, nuggets, and tenders)
- Sandwiches (hamburgers, hot dogs, and sub sandwiches)
- Snack foods (crackers, chips, pretzels/snack mix, and popcorn)
- Soups

Additional sources of sodium often found in school menus include:

- Corn dogs
- Flavored milk (Additional sodium is added to flavored milk during processing)
- Pickles and olives
- Potato products (mashed potatoes, oven-baked fries, potato wedges, and tater tots)
- Ready-to-eat cereals
- Salad dressings (ranch, Italian, and French), mayonnaise, and soy/teriyaki sauce

- Tomato-based sauces and condiments (spaghetti sauce, marinara sauce, ketchup, and salsa)

While sodium is not a meal component, sodium is found in many food items that you offer. Tracking amounts of sodium in your menu will help you stay on top of your sodium values during the menu planning process.

Transitional Standards

Beginning with School Year (SY) 2022–2023, the implementation of the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium – [Final Rule](#) establishes transitional standards to support the continued effort to provide nutritious school meals as schools respond to and recover from the pandemic. These transitional standards establish meal pattern requirements for milk, whole grains, and sodium for SY 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 to give schools time to transition in the short term.

Final Rule for Sodium

▶ NSLP

- The weekly sodium limit for NSLP and will remain at the current level, known as Target 1, for School Year 2022–2023.
- For school lunch only, the limit will decrease marginally (10%) in SY 2023–2024 (Sodium Interim Target 1A) to put schools on an achievable path toward long-term sodium reduction.

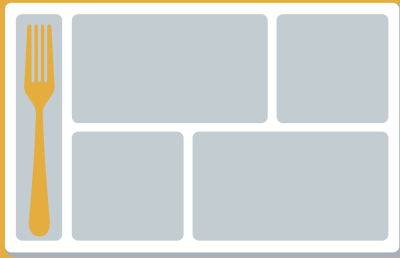
▶ SBP

- Maintain Target 1 for SY 2022–2023 and SY 2023–2024.

For more resources on reducing sodium, visit <https://theicn.org/shaking-it-up/> to check out the ICN’s Shaking it Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors worksheets and online courses.

Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What are some food items commonly served in schools that are higher in sodium?
 - Answer: corn dogs, pickles, potato products, ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals, salad dressings, and tomato-based sauces and condiments
- ▶ Why is it important to limit sodium consumption?
 - Answer: Too much dietary sodium can lead to chronic illnesses, such as stroke and heart disease.



SODIUM

TRANSITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL YEARS 2022–2023 AND 2023–2024



National School Lunch Program

**NO
CHANGE**

for school year 2022–2023
(known as Target 1)

**10%
REDUCTION**

for school year 2023–2024
(known as Target 1A)

School Breakfast Program

NO CHANGE

for school years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024
(known as Target 1)

National School Lunch Program
Transitional Sodium Timeline and Limits

Age/Grade Group	Target 1: Effective July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	Interim Target 1A: Effective July 1, 2023
K–5	1,230 mg	1,110mg
6–8	1,360 mg	1,225 mg
9–12	1,420 mg	1,280 mg

School Breakfast Program
Transitional Sodium Timeline and Limits

Age/Grade Group	Target 1: Effective July 1, 2022
K–5	540 mg
6–8	600 mg
9–12	640 mg

For more resources on reducing sodium, visit <https://theicn.org/shaking-it-up/> to check out the ICN's Shaking it Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors worksheets and online courses.

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ACTIVITY: Menu Planning – Sodium

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: Menu Planning – Sodium worksheet, pens/pencils

Instructions: Participants will identify the sources of higher-sodium food items on the menu. Distribute the Menu Planning – Sodium worksheet. Read the instructions to the participants: Using the worksheet provided, circle the sources of higher-sodium food items on the menu. Which items could be served less frequently or replaced with other lower-sodium versions? Allow participants time to complete the worksheet. Then discuss the answers.

Answer Key:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main Entrée				
Turkey and Cheese Sandwich	Chicken and Cheese Tortilla	Chicken Nuggets	French Toast Sticks Sausage Patty	Beef Teriyaki Dipper Fried Rice
Vegetables				
French Fries Broccoli Tossed Salad	Mexicali Corn Refried Beans Tossed Salad	Mashed Potatoes Carrot Sticks Tossed Salad	Sweet Potato Fries Carrot Raisin Salad Tossed Salad	Celery Chinese-Style Veggies Tossed Salad
Fruits				
Apple Banana Peach	Apple Banana Pear	Apple Banana Fruit Cocktail	Apple Banana Orange	Apple Banana Peach
Condiments				
Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Syrup Salad Dressing	Salad Dressing
Milk				
Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored

Main Entrée

The Turkey and Cheese Sandwich, Chicken and Cheese Tortilla, and Chicken Nuggets are all sources of sodium.

- Limit your highest sodium entrée menu items to two per week and offer lower-sodium entrée options the other three days.
- Pair high-sodium entrées with lower-sodium versions or entrées. For example, offer another option with the Turkey and Cheese Sandwich on Monday—a Turkey Sandwich without Cheese. Serving a lower-sodium alternate version or second entrée is another avenue in which to lower the sodium average for the day. Consider comparing products and replacing with lower-sodium versions of cold cuts.

Vegetables

Three potato products—French Fries, Mashed Potatoes, and Sweet Potato Fries are provided on this menu! The way potatoes products are processed makes them higher in sodium than other vegetable options.

- Offer potato products only once or twice per week. Consider offering another fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetable as an alternative.

Fruit

Naturally low in sodium, fruit will be among the lowest sodium items offered on any menu.

- Increasing the amount and variety of fruit offered may help offset the consumption of higher-sodium items.

Condiments

The sodium from ketchup and salad dressing can add up quickly! Is ketchup necessary on Tuesday?

- Only provide a condiment when it is intended to go with a specific menu item. Consider limiting condiment packets or self-service condiments.

Milk

On average, flavored milk provides about 50% more sodium than unflavored milk.

- Consider removing flavored milk from the menu or reducing the frequency in which it is served.

Additional note to share with participants: Besides serving items less frequently, operators can procure lower-sodium versions, reduce sodium through speed-scratch recipes instead of heat and serve items, and use spice blends instead of salt and seasoned products to lower the weekly sodium average.

Menu Planning – Sodium

Instructions: Using the weekly menu provided, circle the sources of higher-sodium food items on the menu. Which items could be served less frequently or replaced with other lower-sodium versions?

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main Entrée				
Turkey and Cheese Sandwich	Chicken and Cheese Tortilla	Chicken Nuggets	French Toast Sticks Sausage Patty	Beef Teriyaki Dipper Fried Rice
Vegetables				
French Fries Broccoli Tossed Salad	Mexicali Corn Refried Beans Tossed Salad	Mashed Potatoes Carrot Sticks Tossed Salad	Sweet Potato Fries Carrot Raisin Salad Tossed Salad	Celery Chinese-Style Veggies Tossed Salad
Fruits				
Apple Banana Peach	Apple Banana Pear	Apple Banana Fruit Cocktail	Apple Banana Orange	Apple Banana Peach
Condiments				
Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Ketchup Mustard Salad Dressing	Syrup Salad Dressing	Salad Dressing
Milk				
Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored	Milk, 1% Unflavored Milk, 1% Chocolate Milk, Skim Unflavored

ACTIVITY: Speed Action Planning

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for program operators/menu planners to establish an action plan for applying the information learned in this session in their workplaces.

Materials Needed: Speed Action Planning worksheet, planner or cell phone calendar app, and pens/pencils

Instructions: Distribute the Speed Action Planning worksheet. Inform participants that it is important to develop a plan for using the information from the training. Ask them to take 1–2 minutes to answer the following three questions to establish an action plan. Once the participants have finished, encourage them to save this goal to a planner, calendar app, or other sources to ensure they follow through with their plan.

- What did you learn in this training?
- How will you apply this information in your current or future roles?
- When will you apply this information?

Speed Action Planning

Instructions: Today’s training featured key information on the sodium requirements for NSLP and SBP. Answer the following three questions to establish a plan for using the information.

1. What did you learn in this training?

2. How will you apply this information in your current or future roles?

3. When will you apply this information (for example, one week, one month, six months, etc.)?

REFERENCES

- Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Final Rule, 7 C.F.R. § 210, 215, 220, and 226. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium>
- Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, 7 C.F.R. § 210, 220. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/01/26/2012-1010/nutrition-standards-in-the-national-school-lunch-and-school-breakfast-programs>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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