

NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR ADDED SUGARS: OVERVIEW

The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030](#) emphasize reducing added sugars as part of building healthy dietary patterns for all Americans. Helping children develop eating patterns lower in added sugars supports their health and well-being both now and later in life.

Consistent with recommendations from the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025](#), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) determined that limits on added sugars were needed in school meals. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the Final Rule, “[Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020–2025 DGAs](#),” which established the current added sugars requirements for school meals. These requirements remain in effect while USDA reviews and considers future updates in response to the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030](#).

Definition of Added Sugars

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), “[Added sugars](#) include sugars that are added during the processing of foods (such as sucrose or dextrose), foods packaged as sweeteners (such as table sugar), sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. They do not include naturally occurring sugars that are found in milk, fruits, and vegetables.”

Health Risks of a Diet High in Added Sugars

Overconsumption of added sugars can lead to a range of health problems, including:

	Increased risk of obesity	Diets high in added sugars are associated with higher caloric intake, which can contribute to weight gain and obesity.
	Elevated risk of type 2 diabetes	Excessive consumption of added sugars can lead to insulin resistance, a precursor to type 2 diabetes.
	Dental cavities and tooth decay	Foods and beverages high in added sugars promote the growth of bacteria that cause tooth decay and cavities, especially when consumed frequently throughout the day.
	Increased risk of heart disease	Intake of high levels of added sugars is linked to elevated triglyceride levels, lower HDL (good) cholesterol levels, and increased risk factors for heart disease.
	Poor nutrition	Displacing more nutrient-dense foods from the diet, foods and beverages high in added sugars often provide empty calories. Empty calories contain little to no essential nutrients.

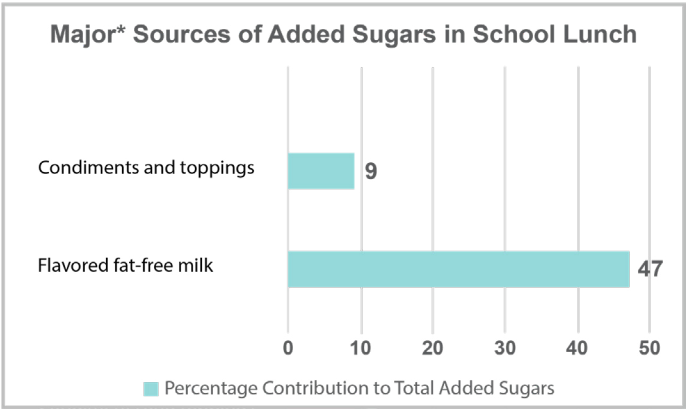
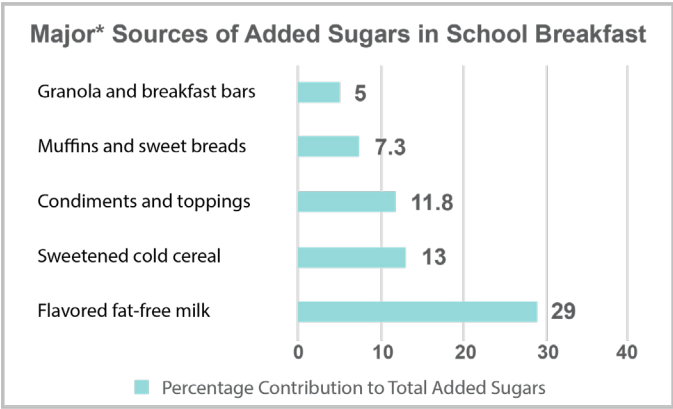
Sources of Added Sugars in School Meals

The USDA FNS [Added Sugars in School Meals and Competitive Foods Report to Congress](#) found that school breakfasts provide about 17 percent of calories from added sugars; meanwhile, school lunches provide about 11 percent.

The key findings in the report state the following:

92% of schools prepared **breakfasts** with 10% or more calories from added sugars.

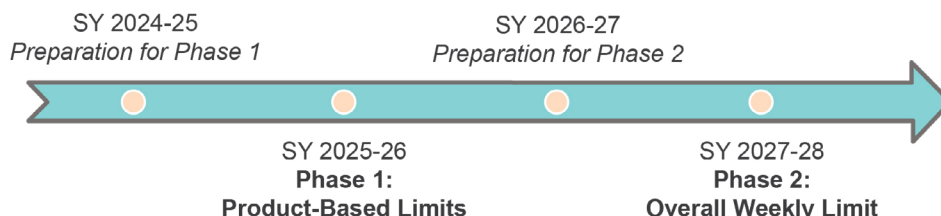
69% of schools prepared **lunches** with 10% or more calories from added sugars.



**Major sources of added sugars are those that contribute at least 5 percent of the total added sugars in a school meal.*

Two-Phase Approach for Limiting Added Sugars

To give schools time to implement these changes, the USDA established a two-phase approach for implementing added sugars limits in school meals. Phase 1 focuses on added sugars limits for specific high-sugar products (cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk). Phase 2 introduces an overall weekly limit on added sugars in school meals.



Phase 1: Product-Based Limits

As of July 1, 2025, added sugars limits must be met for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk served at school breakfast or lunch.

The USDA anticipates that implementing these product-based limits first will help schools prepare to meet the overall weekly added sugars limit, which takes effect July 1, 2027.

Breakfast Cereals	Yogurt	Flavored Milk*
		
No more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).	No more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces.

**For flavored milk sold outside of the meal (as a competitive beverage for middle and high school students), no more than 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.*

Phase 2: Overall Weekly Limit

Beginning July 1, 2027, added sugars are limited to less than 10 percent of calories across the week in the school breakfast and lunch programs. This requirement is in addition to the product-based limits.

Dietary Specifications	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Weekly Average
Min-max calories (kcal)	770	828	765	808	844	803
Saturated fat (percent of total calories)	8.7	9.3	9.2	9.6	10.3	9.22
Added sugars (percent of total calories)	9.2	10.8	10.3	9.4	9.8	9.9
Sodium limit (mg)	1,101	968	1,180	976	1,004	1,046

References

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