

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Strategies for Reducing Added Sugar in Child Care Meals

Recognizing added sugars

Did you know that the average person consumes over 20 teaspoons of added sugar each day? According to the American Heart Association, the average American takes in an extra 350 calories from 22 teaspoons of added sugar per day—but what are added sugars? Added sugars are sugars, syrups, and other sweet ingredients put into a food during processing, preparing, or during meal service. Some foods containing added sugars include juice, yogurt, cereal, and soft drinks, but there are many, many more.



Although consuming meals with added sugars can be a part of a balanced diet, a great way to help children get off to a healthy start is to reduce added sugars as much as possible. Limiting added sugar during the early years may help children to develop healthier eating habits and reduce their risk for obesity and other illnesses later in life. The great news is there are many ways to reduce added sugar in your program. Here are three strategies to consider when serving meals to young children.

Limit juice to once per day

In the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), limiting juice to once per day is a requirement for a reimbursable meal. It is also a great way to limit added sugar in the diets of young children. Juice is often high in added sugar and has very little fiber compared to whole fruits and vegetables. Limiting it to once per day or less is healthful to young children, and even fewer times is better.

There are several ways to limit juice to once per day. For example, you can always serve whole fruits and pair with plain water. Another option is to flavor water with vegetables, fruits, herbs, and/or spices. When choosing this option, it's important to remember two things: (1) commercially flavored water is not creditable in the CACFP and (2) any vegetables and/or fruits added to flavor plain water cannot count toward the vegetable or fruit component for meals and snacks.



Do away with grain-based desserts (GBD)

Another way to limit added sugars is to know how to identify GBDs and remove them in your child care setting. This strategy is not only a great practice, but it is also a requirement for serving reimbursable meals and snacks. GBDs are not reimbursable in the CACFP.

What is a GBD and what isn't?

- Grain-Based Desserts are items such as brownies, cakes and cupcakes, cookies, doughnuts, and sweet bread puddings.
- Not Grain-Based Desserts are items such as banana bread, zucchini bread, and cereals that meet the sugar limit.

For additional information on identifying GBDs, refer to the USDA's *Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* training sheet located at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/tn/CACFPGrainBasedDesserts.pdf>. It features a comprehensive list of both GBD and Not-GBD.

Know how to read an ingredient list for added sugar

The third way to limit added sugar is to check the ingredient list. Some common foods that are sources of hidden sugar are tomato ketchup, flavored cereal, and flavored yogurt.

You can find the ingredient list on the back of a food package, usually under the Nutrition Facts Label or near the bottom of the product. It features the ingredients by quantity, meaning the items are listed from highest amount to lowest amount. Knowing how to read an ingredient list is essential for knowing what's in the food and recognizing how to limit those items that are not ideal for good health.

When reading an ingredient list for added sugars, you must know common sugar terms.

- Brown sugar
- Confectioner's powdered sugar
- Corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- Galactose
- Glucose
- Honey
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Sucrose

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 3/4 cup (29g)
Serving Per Container: about 9

Amount Per Serving	Cereal (dry)	Cereal with 1/2 cup skim milk
Calories	120	160
Calories for Fat	10	10
	% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1g*	2%	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	0%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	0%
Sodium 85mg	4%	6%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	8%	10%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%	4%
Sugars 7g		
Protein 2g		
Vitamin A	10%	15%
Vitamin C	10%	10%
Calcium	10%	25%
Iron	15%	15%
Vitamin D	10%	25%
Thiamin	15%	20%
Riboflavin	10%	25%
Niacin	15%	15%
Vitamin B6	15%	15%
Folic Acid	15%	15%
Vitamin B12	15%	25%

* Amount in Cereal (dry). Cereal with 1/2 cup skim milk contributes an additional 40 Calories, 0.5 Total Fat, 55 mg Sodium, 6 G Total Carbohydrates (6g Sugars), 4 g Protein

**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs: Calories: 2,000 2,500

Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300g	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Potassium	3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

Ingredients: WHEAT FLOUR, SUGAR, BROWN RICE FLOUR, OATS, HONEY, CANOLA OIL, MALTODEXTRIN, SALT, CORN SYRUP, CINNAMON, BARLEY MALT SYRUP (MALTOSE), BARLEY MALT EXTRACT, COLOR ADDED, SOY LECITHIN, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, BAKING SODA, TRISODIUM PHOSPHATE, VITAMIN E (MIXED TOCOPHEROLS) AND BHT ADDED TO PRESERVE FRESHNESS.

Contains: Wheat and soy

Ways to Serve Nutritious Alternatives

- ▶ Drink low-fat milk or water in place of sodas.
- ▶ Serve fruits and vegetables in fun, festive ways, such as a fresh fruit cake made of seasonal produce.
- ▶ Replace sweet toppings (e.g., syrups, honey, and cinnamon sugars) with more nutritious options, such as fresh fruit.



Limiting added sugar is a great way to help young children have a healthy start. These three strategies are just a few ways to limit added sugar in your program. For additional information, refer to the following resources:

- **USDA's Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks**
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- **USDA's Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Food Program**
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/tn/CACFPGrainBasedDesserts.pdf>
- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' Looking to Reduce your Family's Intake of Added Sugar? Here's How**
<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/looking-to-reduce-your-familys-added-sugar-intake-heres-how>
- **Dietary Guidelines for American's Cut Down on Added Sugars**
https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/dga_cut-down-on-added-sugars.pdf

References

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