

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Approach

Houston County Child Nutrition Program's menu planning system of choice is Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (**NuMenus**). Under the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Approach (NSMP/**NuMenus**), meals are planned using USDA-approved computer software specifically programmed to help plan menus that meet the required level of calories, nutrients, and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* for specific age groups. With NuMenus, there are no required food components and food items except for milk. Therefore, this approach does not use meal patterns. Instead, with this approach, menu planners work with menu items. **A menu item is any single food or combination of foods.** Menus must meet the nutrient standards for specific age groups averaged over a school week and the completed nutritional analysis of the menus must reflect what students are offered. The school food authority **must have completed nutritional analyses** which show the menus meet the nutritional requirements for all meals claimed for reimbursement.

Meal Structure for Lunch

In the National School Lunch Program, meals are required to have three menu items for lunch. There are three categories:

Entrée (1 serving): A combination of foods or a single food item offered as the main course.

Milk (1 serving): Fluid (as a beverage) must be offered, but no specific amount is required.

Side Dishes (1 or more servings): Any other menu item offered is considered a side dish unless it is a condiment.

Condiments are not menu items. Condiments are additions to the meal. Condiments must be included as part in the overall nutrient analysis, but are not considered menu items.

Meal Structure for Breakfast

For the School Breakfast Program, meals are required to have three menu items for breakfast. There are two categories:

Milk (1 serving): Fluid (as a beverage) must be offered, but no specific amount is required.

Side Dishes (2 servings): Any other menu item offered is considered a side dish unless it is a condiment.

Age Groups

There are three ways to meet the nutrient standards for specific age groups:

- Plan menus by grade groups: K–3, K-6, and grades 7–12.
- Use a set of established age groups: ages 3–6, ages 7–10, ages 11–13, or age 14 or older.
- Develop customized age groups. You must have a minimum of two groups if the groups span grades 5 and 6 or ages 10 and 11 years of age.

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Calorie and Nutrient Standards for Age Groups

| Minimum Calorie and Nutrient Levels for School Lunch (school week averages) | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Nutrients and energy allowances | Ages 3-6 | Ages 7-10 | Ages 11-13 | Ages 14 and older |
| Energy Allowances (calories) | 558 | 667 | 783 | 846 |
| Total Fat (g) ³ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total saturated fat (g) ³ | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Protein (g) | 7.3 | 9.3 | 15.0 | 16.7 |
| Calcium (mg) | 267 | 267 | 400 | 400 |
| Iron (mg) | 3.3 | 3.3 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Vitamin A (RE) | 158 | 233 | 300 | 300 |
| Vitamin C (mg) | 14.6 | 15.0 | 16.7 | 19.2 |

| Minimum Calorie and Nutrient Levels for School Breakfast (School Week Averages) | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Nutrients and energy allowances | Ages 3-6 | Ages 7-10 | Ages 11-13 | Ages 14 and older |
| Energy Allowances (calories) | 419 | 500 | 588 | 625 |
| Total Fat (g) ³ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total saturated fat (g) ³ | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Protein (g) | 5.50 | 7.00 | 11.25 | 12.50 |
| Calcium (mg) | 200 | 200 | 300 | 300 |
| Iron (mg) | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| Vitamin A (RE) | 119 | 175 | 225 | 225 |
| Vitamin C (mg) | 11.00 | 11.25 | 12.50 | 14.40 |

¹ Total fat must not exceed 30 percent of the calories offered over a school week.

² Saturated fat must be less than 10 percent of the calories offered over a school week.

³ The grams of fat will vary depending on actual level of calories offered. To calculate the maximum allowable fat grams, multiply the number of calories by the maximum allowable percentage and then divide by nine (9).