

Summer Food Service Program: Providing Multiple Meals at a Time During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with State Child Nutrition agencies to provide safe and flexible meal service to children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency. Under nationwide non-congregate feeding and meal times waivers, State agencies may allow Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) operators to provide more than 1 day's worth of meals to eligible children via a single meal pick-up (by the child or the child's parent or guardian) or delivery.^{1,2} For example, a summer meal site may distribute 5 days of meals on Monday morning, providing children with breakfast and lunch for the week.

What Meals and Snacks Can Program Operators Claim for Reimbursement per Child, per Day?

- Breakfast and lunch;
- Breakfast and snack;
- Lunch and snack;
- Breakfast and supper;
- Two snacks; or
- Supper and snack.

What Should Program Operators Consider When Deciding How Many Days of Meals To Provide at a Time?

- How long foods may be safely stored before eating.
- How long foods can be stored before food quality suffers.
- Participants' access to refrigeration and freezer space for the amounts of food and milk provided.
- Food storage space at the summer site and on meal delivery vehicles (such as buses or food trucks).
- Whether fewer pick-up days and times will decrease access to meals for some children.



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19>

¹Nationwide Waiver To Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs, COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #1, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-meal-times-nationwide-waiver>.

²Nationwide Waiver To Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs, COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #2, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19/non-congregate-feeding-nationwide-waiver>.

WHAT FOOD ITEMS MAY BE PROVIDED IN BULK?

- Foods that normally credit towards reimbursable meals under the SFSP.
- Foods that are recognizable as a meal component in a reimbursable meal.
- Foods that do not require much preparation or the addition of other ingredients (aside from water) before eating.

CAN FROZEN BULK FOODS BE PROVIDED?

Yes. Frozen foods, which require minimal preparation other than heating, may be provided as part of meals if they meet meal pattern requirements. Providing foods in a frozen state may present a safe way to offer perishable foods for consumption later in the week (for example, 4 or 5 days after distribution).

Providing Foods in “Bulk” Packages

Under State-approved non-congregate feeding and meal times waivers, Program operators may provide **bulk food** items that contribute to multiple meals for children. Program operators can provide menus and instructions with the foods to communicate to children and their parents or guardians how to portion and serve foods at mealtime. For example, the Program operator could provide a half-gallon of milk, instead of multiple 8-fluid ounces (fl oz) cartons of milk, along with a menu showing that an 8 fl oz (1 cup) serving of milk is part of each breakfast and lunch meal.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, with State-approved non-congregate feeding and meal times waivers, Program operators are not required to provide “**unitized**” meals.

Bulk Foods

Food packages containing an amount of food that is more than what is required at a single meal under the SFSP meal patterns. A bulk food item may provide food to be eaten at more than one meal.

Unitized Meals

Meals are considered **unitized** when meal components are provided and packaged in amounts for a single meal. For example, a unitized breakfast for SFSP might include 8 fl oz (1 cup) milk, 1 serving of cereal, and ½ cup fruit.

MEAL PATTERN CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM OPERATORS

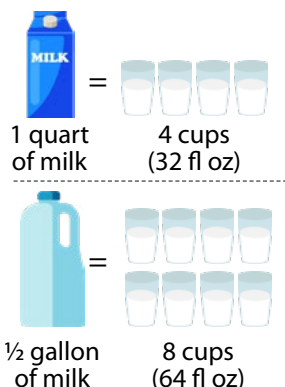
- How menus will be planned to:
 - provide a variety of foods within the meal components to ensure meals meet the nutritional needs of children.
 - provide no more than half of the vegetables/fruits requirement as 100% full-strength juice at lunch and supper.*
 - ensure nuts and seeds contribute no more than half of the meats/meat alternates component at meals.*
 - ensure two forms of the same fruit or vegetable are not served in the same meal (for example: an orange and orange juice, or two oranges).*
- How “extra” foods will contribute toward children’s nutritional needs.

*State agencies may grant waivers for these and other meal pattern requirements under specific circumstances. For more information, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-meal-pattern-flexibility-waiver>.



Breakfast (B) and Lunch (L): Minimum Amounts of Food Needed for 3, 4, or 5-Day Distribution

This chart shows how minimum required amounts compare to container sizes commonly available on the retail market. Amounts are based on information from the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>).



This is a common container size.

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	3-day	4-day	5-day
Milk	8 fl oz		
Milk (B)	24 fl oz (3 cups)	32 fl oz (4 cups)	40 fl oz (5 cups)
Milk (L)	24 fl oz (3 cups)	32 fl oz (4 cups)	40 fl oz (5 cups)
Total Milk	1 qt plus 2 cups (48 fl oz)	0.5 gal (64 fl oz)	0.5 gal plus 2 cups (80 fl oz)
Applesauce (23-oz jar)	1/2 cup		
Applesauce (B)	0.59 jar (1.5 cups)	0.79 jar (2 cups)	1 jar (2.5 cups)
Applesauce (L)	0.59 jar (1.5 cups)	0.79 jar (2 cups)	1 jar (2.5 cups)
Total Jars (23-oz jars) of Applesauce	1.18 jars (3 cups)	1.58 jars (4 cups)	2 jars (5 cups)
Fruit Juice	Serving amount varies		
Juice, 100% full-strength (B)	Breakfast: 1/2 cup (4 fl oz)		
	12 fl oz (1.5 cups)	16 fl oz (2 cups)	20 fl oz (2.5 cups)
Juice, 100% full-strength (L)	Lunch: 3/8 cup (3 fl oz)		
	9 fl oz (1.13 cups)	12 fl oz (1.5 cups)	15 fl oz (1.88 cups)
Total Juice	21 fl oz (2.63 cups)	28 fl oz (3.5 cups)	35 fl oz (4.38 cups)
Canned Peaches (16-oz can)	1/2 cup		
Peaches, Sliced (B)	0.94 can (1.5 cups)	1.25 cans (2 cups)	1.56 cans (2.5 cups)
Peaches, Sliced (L)	0.94 can (1.5 cups)	1.25 cans (2 cups)	1.56 cans (2.5 cups)
Total Cans (16-oz cans) of Peaches	1.88 cans (3 cups)	2.5 cans (4 cups)	3.12 cans (5 cups)
Canned Pears (15-oz can)	1/2 cup		
Pears, Halves (B)	0.85 can (1.5 cups)	1.14 cans (2 cups)	1.42 cans (2.5 cups)
Pears, Halves (L)	0.85 can (1.5 cups)	1.14 cans (2 cups)	1.42 cans (2.5 cups)
Total Cans (15-oz cans) of Pears	1.7 cans (3 cups)	2.28 cans (4 cups)	2.84 cans (5 cups)

Reminder

Remember, under SFSP meal pattern requirements, pasteurized 100% full-strength juice may only be used to meet up to half of the vegetables/ fruits requirement at lunch and supper.

Reminder

Providing a variety of foods can help children get important nutrients. Look for ways to balance the use of bulk foods with this best practice of providing variety during the week.

Reminder

Round up when the amount needed is only part of a can. For example, provide 4 full cans if the amount needed is 3.12 cans.

This is a common container size.

	3-day	4-day	5-day
Frozen Strawberries (16-oz bag)	½ cup		
Strawberries, Sliced, Sweetened (B)	0.85 bag (1.5 cups)	1.13 bags (2 cups)	1.41 bags (2.5 cups)
Strawberries, Sliced, Sweetened (L)	0.85 bag (1.5 cups)	1.13 bags (2 cups)	1.41 bags (2.5 cups)
Total Bags (16-oz bags) of Strawberries	1.70 bags (3 cups)	2.26 bags (4 cups)	2.82 bags (5 cups)
Canned Green Beans (15-oz can)	½ cup		
Green Beans, Cut, Drained, Heated (L)	1.20 cans (1.5 cups)	1.60 cans (2 cups)	2 cans (2.5 cups)
Total Cans (15-oz cans) of Green Beans	1.20 cans (1.5 cups)	1.60 cans (2 cups)	2 cans (2.5 cups)
Frozen Broccoli (16-oz bag)	½ cup		
Broccoli, Florets (L)	0.43 bag (1.5 cups)	0.57 bag (2 cups)	0.71 bag (2.5 cups)
Total Bags (16-oz bags) of Broccoli	0.43 bag (1.5 cups)	0.57 bag (2 cups)	0.71 bag (2.5 cups)
Frozen Green Beans (16-oz bag)	½ cup		
Green Beans (L)	0.52 bag (1.5 cups)	0.69 bag (2 cups)	0.86 bag (2.5 cups)
Total Bags (16-oz bags) of Green Beans	0.52 bag (1.5 cups)	0.69 bag (2 cups)	0.86 bag (2.5 cups)
Bread, Whole Grain-Rich (20-oz loaf)	1 slice		
Bread, Whole Grain-Rich (B)	3 slices	4 slices	5 slices
Bread, Whole Grain-Rich (L)	3 slices	4 slices	5 slices
Total Loaves (20-oz loaf) of Bread	0.3 loaf (6 slices)	0.4 loaf (8 slices)	0.5 loaf (10 slices)
Canned Black Beans (15.5-oz can)	½ cup		
Black Beans (L)	1 can (1.5 cups)	1.35 cans (2 cups)	1.69 cans (2.5 cups)
Total Cans of (15.5-oz cans) Black Beans	1 can (1.5 cups)	1.35 cans (2 cups)	1.69 cans (2.5 cups)
Canned Refried Beans (16-oz can)	½ cup		
Refried Beans (L)	0.85 can (1.5 cups)	1.13 cans (2 cups)	1.41 cans (2.5 cups)
Total Cans (16-oz cans) of Refried Beans	0.85 can (1.5 cups)	1.13 cans (2 cups)	1.41 cans (2.5 cups)

This is a common container size.

Reminder

Always round up to the next full-size container. For example, if the amount needed is 1.14 cans of tuna, provide 2 full cans.

This is a common container size.

Reminder

Offering yogurt for 4 days allows you to provide a 32-oz container without any extra. If you want to offer yogurt for 5 days, you could provide one 32-oz container plus one 8-oz container of yogurt.

	3-day	4-day	5-day
Canned Tuna, Chunk Style (6-oz can)	2 oz		
Tuna (L)	1.14 cans (6 oz)	1.52 cans (8 oz)	1.9 cans (10 oz)
Total Cans (6-oz cans) of Tuna	1.14 cans (6 oz)	1.52 cans (8 oz)	1.9 cans (10 oz)
Yogurt, Commercially Prepared (32-oz container)	8 oz		
Yogurt (L)	0.75 container (24 oz)	1 container (32 oz)	1.25 containers (40 oz)
Total Containers (32-oz containers) of Yogurt	0.75 container (24 oz)	1 container (32 oz)	1.25 containers (40 oz)
oz = ounce; oz eq = ounce equivalent; fl oz = fluid ounces; qts = quarts; gal = gallons			

Food Quality

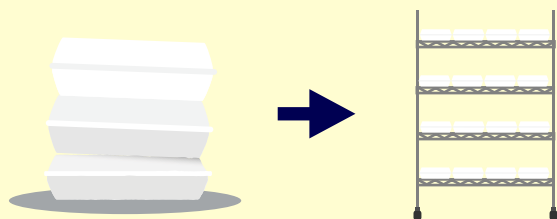
Distributing 3, 4, or 5 days of meals may present food quality challenges. Below are some tips to consider:



For sandwiches and wraps, package bread separately from sandwich fillings and provide instructions on how parents, guardians, and older children can assemble the sandwiches at mealtime.



For pre-made salads, package dressings separately from salad greens and provide instructions on how to dress the salad at home.



Avoid stacking meals to prevent damage. Large rolling carts can help transport meals in single layers around the distribution site.

Documentation of Meal Components

When providing multiple meals at a time, Program operators must continue to maintain documentation and menu records that show the served meal components and quantities. Program operators must keep supporting menu documentation, such as labels, recipes, and manufacturer specifications in accordance with Program regulations.

Meal Accommodations

Program operators must continue to provide reasonable modifications to Program meals or the meal service to accommodate children with disabilities.

Food Safety

When providing meals, Program operators are encouraged to help parents and guardians identify which foods require refrigeration, cooking, or heating for food safety. Examples of strategies include:

- Labeling foods that require refrigeration or freezing.
- Providing a list of foods that require refrigeration, freezing, and heating.
- Sorting foods into two different bags prior to distribution—one for refrigerated and frozen foods and another for shelf-stable foods.
- Planning menus that show the use of more perishable foods earlier in the week and frozen or shelf-stable foods later in the week.

In addition, Program operators are encouraged to remind parents and guardians to:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before preparing or handling food.
- Wash dishes, utensils, tables, and counter tops with hot, soapy water before and after eating food.
- Refrigerate or freeze meals and milk immediately after pick-up or delivery.
- Set home refrigerator temperatures to 40 °F or below, and home freezers to 0 °F or below.
- Eat perishable food (e.g., prepared chicken, cooked pasta, etc.) earlier in the week. Eat shelf-stable or frozen meals (e.g., nut butter, canned foods, and frozen foods) later in the week.
- Reheat prepared foods, like cooked chicken and cooked hamburger patties, to an internal temperature of at least 165 °F for at least 15 seconds. Heat frozen foods according to package instructions.
- Discard leftovers and open containers/packages of refrigerated food within 3-4 days.
- Unopened containers of milk are typically safe for up to 1 week after the sell-by date. Look for signs of spoilage (for example, a bad smell) before drinking milk.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Eat perishable food (e.g., prepared chicken, cooked pasta, etc.) earlier in the week.			Eat shelf-stable or frozen meals (e.g., nut butter, canned foods, frozen foods) later in the week.	

For more information on food safety, visit <https://www.foodsafety.gov>.

Communicating What Makes a Meal

Program operators are strongly encouraged to provide parents and guardians and older children with a list of the items they are receiving, and menus showing which foods, and how much of each food, should be served at each meal. When possible, Program operators should provide this information in multiple languages and use visual aids, such as pictures. See examples on pages 8-12.



Sample Parent Communication To Accompany Meals (5 Days of Breakfasts and Lunches)

What's Inside?

These bags include meals for your child. They include foods for 5 breakfast and 5 lunch meals.

Cold Bag:

- 1 Half-Gallon and 1 Quart Low-Fat (1%) Milk (96 fl oz/12 cups) 
- 1 Container Baby Carrots (½ cup) 
- 1 Container Celery Sticks (½ cup) 
- 2 Single-Serve Containers of Low-Fat Ranch Dip (1 oz each) 
- Sliced Turkey (4 oz) 
- Sliced Ham (2 oz) 
- Sliced Cheddar Cheese (2 oz) 
- 1 Mozzarella Cheese Stick (1 oz) 

This amount of milk provides 12 servings of milk for your child. Each serving is 1 cup. You will have two cups of milk leftover. Your child can have the extra milk as part of a snack or at another meal.

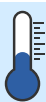


Serve half of the turkey at lunch on Day 1, and serve the remainder at lunch on Day 2.

Pantry Bag:

- 1 Apple
- 1 Orange
- 1 Plum
- 1 Can Mixed Fruit (15 oz)  after opening
- 1 Can Sliced Peaches (16 oz)  after opening
- 1 Box 100% Grape Juice (4.23 fl oz)
- 1 Box 100% Berry Juice (4.23 fl oz)
- 1 Peanut Butter or Seed Butter Packet (1.15 oz/32 grams)
- 2 Bowls Toasted O's Cereal (1 oz/28 grams each)
- 1 Bowl Corn Flakes Cereal (1 oz/28 grams)
- 1 Blueberry Muffin, Enriched (2 oz/56 grams)
- 1 Apple Muffin, Whole Grain-Rich (2 oz/56 grams)
- 10 Slices of Whole Wheat Bread (1 oz/28 grams each)
- 1 Bag Tortilla Chips, Enriched (1 oz/28 grams)
- 1 Single-Serve Salsa Cup (3.8 oz/108 grams)
- 1 Single-Serve Applesauce Cup (4 oz/113 grams)
- 3 Mustard Packets
- 3 Mayonnaise Packets
- 2 Strawberry Jelly Packets
- 10 Utensil Packets

These cans provide mixed fruit and sliced peaches for more than 1 meal for your child. See the menu for amounts for each meal. Remember to refrigerate canned fruits in a food storage container after opening the can.



Store in the refrigerator
at 40 °F or below

See menus on the back of this page.

Sample Parent Communication To Accompany Meals (5 Days of Breakfasts and Lunches) - Continued

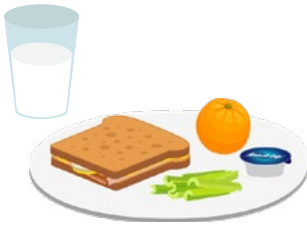
On the Menu | 5 Days of Summer Meals

Day 1 Menu



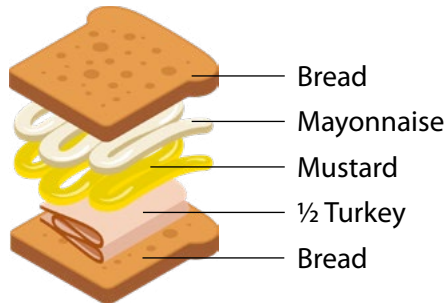
Breakfast

- 1 Cup Milk
- 1 Apple
- 1 Bowl Toasted O's Cereal^{WG}

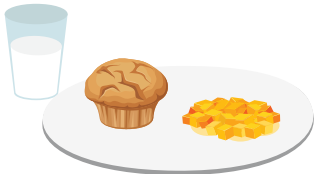


Lunch

- 1 Cup Milk
- 1 Orange
- ½ Cup Celery Sticks
- Low-Fat Ranch Dip
- 1 Turkey Sandwich^{WG}

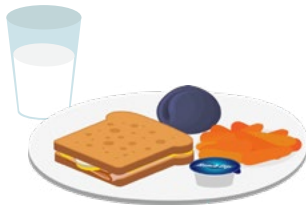


Day 2 Menu



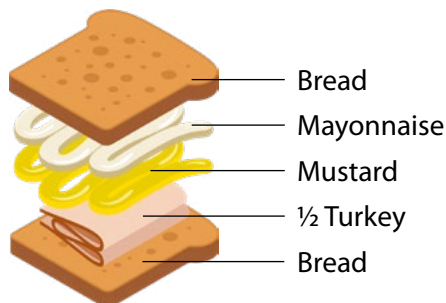
Breakfast

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Mixed Fruit
- 1 Apple Muffin^{WG}



Lunch

- 1 Cup Milk
- 1 Plum
- ½ Cup Baby Carrots
- Low-Fat Ranch Dip
- 1 Turkey Sandwich^{WG}



^{WG}Whole Grain-Rich

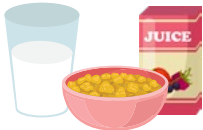
Program operator note:

Only one serving of grains is required at lunch. In this sample menu, an extra serving of grains is included for lunch on 4 days. Day 5 includes two extra servings of grains at lunch. These extra grains are due, in part, to the use of two slices of bread for sandwiches and help meet the nutritional needs of older children.

Sample Parent Communication To Accompany Meals (5 Days of Breakfasts and Lunches) - Continued

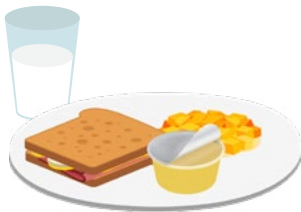
On the Menu | 5 Days of Summer Meals

Day 3 Menu



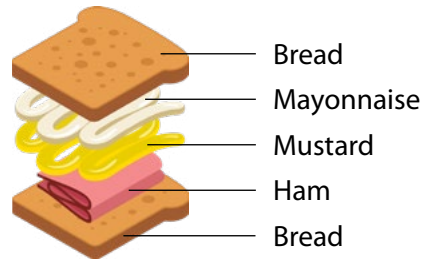
Breakfast

- 1 Cup Milk
- 1 Box Berry Juice
- 1 Bowl Corn Flakes



Lunch

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Mixed Fruit
- 1 Applesauce Cup
- 1 Ham Sandwich^{WG}



Day 4 Menu



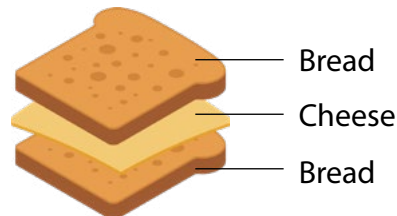
Breakfast

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Mixed Fruit
- 1 Blueberry Muffin

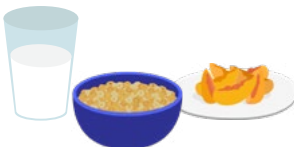


Lunch

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Peaches
- 1 Box Grape Juice
- 1 Cheese Sandwich^{WG}



Day 5 Menu



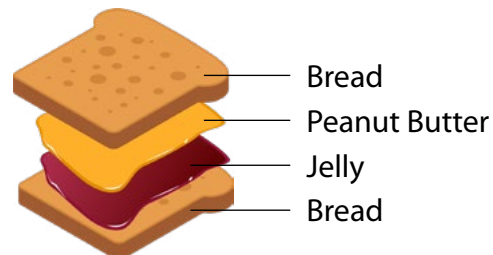
Breakfast

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Peaches
- 1 Bowl Toasted Os^{WG}



Lunch

- 1 Cup Milk
- ½ Cup Canned Peaches
- 1 Salsa Cup with Tortilla Chips
- 1 Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich^{WG}
- 1 Cheese Stick



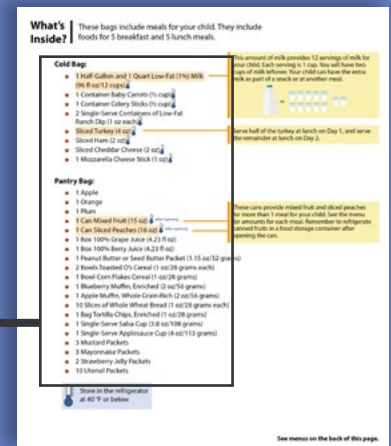
^{WG} Whole Grain-Rich

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A Closer Look

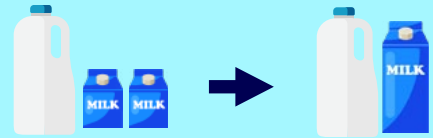
Notes for Program Operators About the Sample Meal Bags for Summer Meals



Cold Bag:

- 1 Half-Gallon and 1 Quart Low-Fat (1%) Milk (96 fl oz/12 cups)
- 1 Container Baby Carrots (½ cup)
- 1 Container Celery Sticks (½ cup)
- 2 Single-Serve Containers of Low-Fat Ranch Dip (1 oz each)
- Sliced Turkey (4 oz)
- Sliced Ham (2 oz)
- Sliced Cheddar Cheese (2 oz)
- 1 Mozzarella Cheese Stick (1 oz)

Only ½ gallon plus 2 cups (16 fl oz) of milk are needed to meet meal pattern requirements. However, a quart (4 cups, 32 fl oz) may be easier to distribute than two 8-fl oz cartons.



Crediting of sliced turkey can vary depending on the Product Formulation Statement or Child Nutrition label.

Pantry Bag:

- 1 Apple
- 1 Orange
- 1 Plum
- 1 Can Mixed Fruit (15 oz) after opening
- 1 Can Sliced Peaches (16 oz) after opening
- 1 Box 100% Grape Juice (4.23 fl oz)
- 1 Box 100% Berry Juice (4.23 fl oz)
- 1 Peanut Butter or Seed Butter Packet (1.15 oz/32 grams)
- 2 Bowls Toasted O's Cereal (1 oz/28 grams each)
- 1 Bowl Corn Flakes Cereal (1 oz/28 grams)
- 1 Blueberry Muffin, Enriched (2 oz/56 grams)
- 1 Apple Muffin, Whole Grain-Rich (2 oz/56 grams)
- 10 Slices of Whole Wheat Bread (1 oz/28 grams each)
- 1 Bag Tortilla Chips, Enriched (1 oz/28 grams)
- 1 Single-Serve Salsa Cup (3.8 oz/108 grams)
- 1 Single-Serve Applesauce Cup (4 oz/113 grams)
- 3 Mustard Packets
- 3 Mayonnaise Packets
- 2 Strawberry Jelly Packets
- 10 Utensil Packets

Extra fruits and vegetables are provided in these meals. Offering extra fruits and vegetables can help kids get the nutrition they need each day.

Each bowl of cereal provides an extra ¼ cup of cereal per day. However, using 1-oz single-serving cereal bowls may be more convenient.



This example shows food for one child for 5 days. However, if you were providing food for two children in the same household, you could use other bulk products, such as 1 gallon plus 1 quart of milk (with no extra), 1 loaf of bread (20 slices), and 4 cans of fruit.

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Food and Nutrition Service**

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