

Nutrient-Based Menu Planning Approach

Under Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP/NuMenus), meals are planned using USDA approved computer software specifically programmed to help you 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 and 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.

When selecting NuMenus as your menu planning approach, **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 SFA **must have completed nutritional analyses** which shows 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 amount is required.
- **Side Dishes (1 or more servings)**: Any other menu items offered are side dishes 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 amount is required.
- **Side Dishes (2 servings)**: Any menu items offered are considered side dishes 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.

Offer versus Serve

Under Offer versus Serve (OVS), students are allowed to take less than the planned portions of the otherwise declined menu items. The required menu items taken by students must be a full serving. The decision to decline the allowed number of menu items or to accept smaller portions of otherwise declined menu items does not affect the charge for the meal. The menu planner establishes what constitutes a “serving” for each menu item. Senior high schools are required to have Offer versus Serve for lunch.

Lunch

With nutrient standard menu planning, Offer versus Serve works as follows for lunch:

At least three menu items must be offered: an entrée, fluid milk, and a side dish.

Students must select at least two of the three menu items. One of the two menu items selected must be an entrée.

If more than three menu items are offered as a meal unit, student may decline no more than two menu items of the meal unit. (Students can never decline the entrée.)

Breakfast

Offer versus Serve is optional at breakfast. Students may decline a maximum of one menu item out of the three or more menu items offered.

Nutrient Standards for Established Age Groups School Week Averages

Age/Grade Group	Ages 3-6	Ages 7-10	Ages 11-13	Ages 14 or older
Energy Allowances (Calories)	558	667	783	846
Protein	7.3 g	9.3 g	15 g	16.7 g
Calcium	267 mg	267 mg	400 mg	400 mg
Iron	2.5 mg	2.5 mg	3.4 mg	3.4 mg
Vitamin A	158 RE	233 RE	300 RE	300 RE
Vitamin C	14.6 mg	15.0 mg	16.7 mg	19.2 mg

1. Total fat not to exceed 30 percent over a school week.
2. Saturated fat to be less than 10 percent over a school week.
3. The grams of fat will vary depending on the actual level of calories offered.