

# Infant Meal Pattern

## Birth through 11 Months

### Child and Adult Care Food Program

Illinois State Board of Education  
 Nutrition Programs  
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The Infant Meal Pattern lists the food to be offered infants from birth through 11 months. The infant meal must contain each of the following components in the amounts indicated for the appropriate age group in order to qualify for reimbursement.

Child care institutions and family day care home providers should:

- Work closely with parents to decide what foods to serve infants.
- Offer food with texture and consistency appropriate for the development of the infant
- Serve food during times consistent with the infant's eating habits. For example, lunch components may be served at two feedings between 12 noon and 2 p.m.
- Introduce solid food gradually to infants when developmentally ready and as instructed by the parent.

MEAL	FOOD COMPONENTS	AGE Birth through 3 Months	AGE 4 Through 7 Months	AGE 8 through 11 Months
Breakfast	Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk <sup>1,2</sup>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-8 fluid ounces	6-8 fluid ounces
	Vegetable and/or Fruit			1-4 Tbsp
	Iron Fortified Infant Cereal		0-3 Tbsp (When developmentally ready)	2-4 Tbsp
Supplement/ Snack	Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk <sup>1,2</sup>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-6 fluid ounces	2-4 fluid ounces OR
	Fruit Juice <sup>3</sup>			2-4 fluid ounces
	Crackers <sup>4</sup>			0-2 crackers (When developmentally ready) OR
	Bread <sup>4</sup>			0-1/2 slice (When developmentally ready)
Lunch/Supper	Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk <sup>1,2</sup>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-8 fluid ounces	6-8 fluid ounces
	Vegetable and/or Fruit		0-3 Tbsp <sup>5</sup> (When developmentally ready)	1-4 Tbsp
	Iron Fortified Infant Cereal		0-3 Tbsp <sup>5</sup> (When developmentally ready)	2-4 Tbsp  (And/or) <sup>6</sup>
	Meat/Meat Alternate <sup>5</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas OR</li> <li>• cheese OR</li> <li>• cottage cheese OR</li> <li>• cheese food or cheese spread</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-4 Tbsp</li> <li>• ½ -2 oz</li> <li>• 2-8 Tbsp</li> <li>• 1-4 oz</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Breast milk, formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended breast milk be served in place of Formula from birth through 11 months.

<sup>2</sup>For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered with additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry.

<sup>3</sup>Fruit juice shall be 100 percent or full-strength.

<sup>4</sup>Bread and bread alternates shall be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour.

<sup>5</sup>Age 4 through 7 months, when developmentally ready, a vegetable, fruit or iron-fortified infant cereal may be served

<sup>6</sup>Age 8 through 11 months, Iron fortified infant cereal may be served and/or a meat/meat alternate.

# Required Guidelines for Infant Meals

Responsibilities of the Child Care Providers—All child care providers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program must provide all the infant components appropriate for the age of the infant according to the Infant Meal Pattern. This includes:

- At least one iron-fortified infant formula which meets the definition of infant formula. It is recommended the child care provider select an infant formula that satisfies the needs of one or more of the infants in your care.
- Iron-fortified dry infant cereal.

The child care provider must feed the infant themselves to receive reimbursement. When a parent comes to the child care institution/home to feed the infant, the meal cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

Infants birth through 11 months of age **must** be offered food from the Infant Meal Pattern. When they reach 12 months of age, follow the Meal Pattern for Children 1 through 12 years of age.

Infant Formula—Offer any iron-fortified infant formula, milk-based or soy-based, intended solely as a food for normal, healthy infants served in a liquid state according to manufacturer's recommended dilution. An infant's meal containing **only** formula, as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern, can be claimed for reimbursement, regardless of who purchases the formula.

To claim the meals when the formula is provided by the parent/guardian, an *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification* form signed by the parent/guardian must be on file. Refer to the Solid Infant Foods section when an infant becomes developmentally ready for other foods.

Breast Milk—The decision whether to breast-feed an infant is up to the infant's mother. Parents may elect to decline the offered infant formula and supply their own breast milk. This must be documented on the *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification*.

An infant's meal containing **only** breast milk (expressed by the mother), as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern, can be claimed for reimbursement. It is acceptable to serve the infant less than the stated minimum portion of breast milk. If the full portion is not initially offered and the infant drinks all of it, additional breast milk must be offered if the infant is still hungry.

A meal served to an infant that contains a portion of breast milk and an additional amount of infant formula is reimbursable as long as the total number of ounces offered to the infant meets, or exceeds, the minimum amount for breast milk/formula as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern.

Developmentally Ready—An infant's developmental readiness determines which foods should be fed, what texture the foods should be, and which feeding style to use. All infants develop at their own rate. Although age and size often correspond with developmental readiness, these should not be used as sole considerations for deciding what and how to feed infants. It is important to be aware of infants rapidly developing mouth abilities and hand and body control so you know the appropriate food and texture to serve them at each stage of their development. On the Infant Meal Pattern for 4 through 11 months of age, you will see foods listed under the category *When Developmentally Ready*. If an infant is developmentally ready, you must offer these foods to the infant.

Infant Cereal—Any iron-fortified dry cereal specially formulated for and generally recognized as cereal for infants that is routinely mixed with breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula prior to consumption.

Solid Infant Foods—The decision to begin offering infant solid foods should be made by the infant's doctor and parent/guardian. When the infant is 4 through 7 months of age and developmentally ready for solid foods, those foods listed on the Infant Meal Pattern under *When Developmentally Ready* must be served to the infant. Infants 8 through 11 months of age are able to eat a wider variety of solid foods as listed on the Infant Meal Pattern. If a parent brings in solid foods for their infant, the meal can be claimed **only** when the meal meets the Infant Meal Pattern requirements and the child care provider purchases and serves at least one of the components according to the Infant Meal Pattern.

A child care provider may puree/grind regular food to the appropriate consistency for infants. However, a child care center must meet food service sanitation requirements to prepare infant food. If commercial baby food is purchased, it must meet the specified requirements. See the following section on *Commercial Baby Food*.

Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification—The *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification*, online at [http://isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/forms\\_cacfp.htm](http://isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/forms_cacfp.htm), lets the parent know the specific brand of iron-fortified infant formula and types of baby food purchased by the child care institution. The notification provides official documentation of the

parent's decision to accept and decline the infant formula, infant cereal, and/or baby food offered by the child care provider. For child care institutions, this document must be completed and signed by the parent and kept on file for **all** infants.

The day care home provider will use a waiver as instructed by the sponsoring organization. The day care home provider must have the parent complete and sign the waiver when the parent is providing their own formula/breast milk or infant food.

**Medical Statement**—If the parent provides an infant formula that does not meet the USDA definition of infant formula such as, infant formula labeled *low-iron* or those specifically formulated for infants with inborn errors of metabolism or digestive or absorptive problems do not meet the infant meal pattern requirement or if the parent wants the infant to receive cow's milk before one year of age, a medical statement signed by a physician is required in order to receive reimbursement. The medical statement must be kept on file. *The Physician's Statement for Food Substitutions (67-48)* can be found on our website.

For more information, refer to [Feeding Infants, A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FNS-258) publication.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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## Commercial Baby Food

This chart will help to clarify the food items that meet the Infant Meal Pattern and are creditable. The food items offer greater flexibility for child care providers to make more nutritious meals available to infants. The foods are grouped by type. This is not an all-inclusive list of foods that can be offered to infants, but only those that need clarification. Refer to the *Crediting Foods Guide* section on crediting foods for infants for further information.

<b>Fruit and Vegetable</b>	<b>Creditable</b>	
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
<b>Food Items</b>		
Fruit and mixed fruit, vegetables and mixed vegetables (appropriate consistency for infant) Fruit or vegetables must be the <u>first ingredient on the jar label</u>	X	
Combination <u>dinners</u> which list fruit or vegetable as the first ingredient on the label		X
Jarred baby <u>cereal</u> with fruit		X
<u>Pudding</u> or <u>dessert</u> with fruit as the first ingredient on the label		X
Fruit or vegetable containing DHA (docosahexaenoic)		X
Vegetable juice		X
<b>Comments</b>		
Child care providers should carefully read the ingredient listing on commercial baby fruits and vegetables. Some brands of commercial baby fruits and vegetables contain food starch, tapioca, cheese, or rice with <u>water listed as the first ingredient</u> . Remember, if a label states the <u>first ingredient is water</u> , then the product is not creditable.		

<b>Meat/Meat Alternate</b>	<b>Creditable</b>	
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
<b>Food Items</b>		
Strained baby food meats	X	
Egg yolk (do NOT serve egg whites to children less than one year)	X	
Combination meat <u>dinners</u>		X
Meat sticks or <i>finger sticks</i> (miniature hot dogs)		X
Hot dogs, sausage		X
Fish or seafood—canned with bones, breaded or battered		X
Yogurt		X
Nuts, seeds, and nut and/or seed butters		X
<b>Comments</b>		
There are a variety of reasons the food products listed above are not creditable: the actual amount of meat in the product is difficult to determine, the manufacturers did not develop the product to be consumed by infants, and/or the products can cause an infant to choke.		

<b>Bread and Crackers</b>	<b>Creditable</b>	
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
<b>Food Items</b>		
Breads: white, wheat, whole wheat, French, Italian, and similar breads	X	
Biscuits	X	
Bagels	X	

<b>Bread and Crackers (cont'd.)</b>	<b>Creditable</b>	
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
<b>Food Items</b>		
English muffins	X	
Pita bread: white, wheat, whole wheat	X	
Rolls: white, wheat, whole wheat, potato	X	
Crackers: saltines or snack, matzo, animal, graham made without honey (Honey, even in baked goods, could possibly contain <i>clostridium botulinum</i> spores which can cause a type of serious food borne illness in infants.)	X	
Soft tortillas: wheat or corn	X	
Zwieback	X	
Teething biscuits	X	
<b>Comment</b>		
<p>The Grains/Breads Instruction which accompanies the Meal Pattern for children ages 1 through 12 years is not applicable for infants. The only grain/bread products included in the Infant Meal Pattern are infant cereal, crusty bread, and cracker-type products. Since infants develop their eating, chewing, and swallowing skills slowly, infants should be gradually introduced to a variety of foods during the first year of life. Not all grain/bread alternates are appropriate for them.</p> <p>The bread and cracker-type products must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour and suitable for an infant to consume as finger food. None of the products should contain nuts, seeds, or hard pieces of whole-grain kernels.</p> <p>The above bread-type items must be prepared in a form suitable for an infant's development to reduce the chance of choking. The best way to serve breads to infants is to cut it into small, thin strips.</p> <p>Do not serve honey, including that cooked or baked in products such as honey graham crackers, to infants less than one year of age. Honey may contain clostridium botulinum spores, which can be extremely harmful to infants.</p>		

<b>Infant Cereal</b>	<b>Creditable</b>	
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
<b>Food Items</b>		
Iron-fortified dry cereal formulated for and generally recognized as cereal for infants is routinely mixed with either iron-fortified infant formula or breast milk prior to eating	X	
Iron-fortified dry infant cereal containing fruit		X
Commercial jarred baby food cereal that is ready to serve		X
Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (cold dry)		X
Breakfast cereals—oatmeal (cooked)		X
<b>Comment</b>		
<p>Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (cold dry) and cooked cereal (oatmeal and farina) are not considered <i>iron-fortified, dry infant cereal</i>.</p>		

Before giving an infant a new food, check with the parents to be certain the infant has been offered the food before and had no reaction to the food. If the child is allergic to certain food(s) which prevents the child care provider from meeting the meal pattern, have a Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitutions completed by a medical physician and keep on file. The Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitutions can be found on our website at [www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition).

Non-creditable foods may be served to infants but cannot be counted towards meeting the meal pattern requirement. These food items may be fed in addition to the required meal patterns.

# INFANT CYCLE MENU

Written and dated menus are required. Since the variety of foods eaten by infants is limited, using a cycle menu is an easy way to meet the requirement and inform parents of the variety of foods offered by the child care provider. The cycle menu is followed daily and offers choices for infants. If a substitution is made from the cycle menu, the substitutions are listed at the bottom of the page.

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

MEAL	FOOD COMPONENTS	AGE	AGE	AGE
		Birth through 3 Months	4 Through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
Breakfast	<b>Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk</b>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-8 fluid ounces	6-8 fluid ounces
	<b>Vegetable and/or Fruit</b> Carrots squash, bananas, and/or peaches			1-4 Tbsp
	<b>Iron Fortified Infant Cereal</b> Rice or oatmeal infant cereal		0-3 Tbsp (When developmentally ready)	2-4 Tbsp
Supplement/ Snack	<b>Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk</b>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-6 fluid ounces	2-4 fluid ounces OR
	<b>Fruit Juice 100%</b> , apple, pear			2-4 fluid ounces
	<b>Crackers</b> teething biscuits, saltine crackers			0-2 crackers (When developmentally ready) OR
	<b>Bread</b> Wheat bread (dry or toasted), roll			0-1/2 slice (When developmentally ready)
Lunch/Supper	<b>Iron Fortified Infant Formula or Breast Milk</b>	4-6 fluid ounces	4-8 fluid ounces	6-8 fluid ounces
	<b>Vegetable and/or Fruit</b> Green beans, sweet potatoes, carrots, and/or applesauce		0-3 Tbsp (When developmentally ready)	1-4 Tbsp
	<b>Iron Fortified Infant Cereal</b> Rice or oatmeal infant cereal		0-3 Tbsp (When developmentally ready)	2-4 Tbsp  (And/or)
	<b>Meat/Meat Alternate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chicken, fish, beef, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas OR</li> <li>• cheese OR</li> <li>• cottage cheese OR</li> <li>• cheese food or cheese spread</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-4 Tbsp</li> <li>• ½ -2 oz</li> <li>• 2-8 Tbsp</li> <li>• 1-4 oz</li> </ul>

Age 4 through 7 months, when developmentally ready, a vegetable, fruit or iron fortified infant cereal may be served.

Age 8 through 11 months, iron fortified infant cereal may be served and/or a meat/meat alternate

### Substitutions:

Date							
Meal							
Age of child							
Veg/and Fruit							
Iron Fortified Infant Cereal							
Bread/Bread Alternate							
Meat/Meat Alternate							

The chart below is a useful tool to determine when an infant's meal is reimbursable. Not all infant meals can be claimed for reimbursement, it depends on who is providing the infant formula/food and the age and development of the infant.

<b>Are These Infant Meals Reimbursable?</b>	Infant 0 through 3 months	Infant 4 through 7 months—drinking only formula/breast milk, NOT developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 4 through 7 months—developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 8 through 11 months—drinking only formula/breast milk, NOT developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 8 through 11 months—developmentally ready for solid foods
Infant receives <u>center/home</u> purchased iron-fortified infant formula and <u>center/home</u> purchased baby food.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes—must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes
Infant receives <u>center/home</u> purchased iron-fortified infant formula and <u>parent</u> provided baby food.	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup> —center/ home provides at least one of the required components.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —center/ home provides at least one of the required components.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided iron-fortified infant formula/breast milk and <u>center/home</u> provided baby food.	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup> —center/ home provides at least one of the required components.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —center/ home provides at least one of the required components.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided iron-fortified infant formula/breast milk and <u>parent</u> <u>provided</u> baby food	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup>	No, center/home did not provide at least one of the required components.	No—center/ home did not provide at least one of the required components.	No—center/ home did not provide at least one of the required food items.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided low-iron infant formula and <u>center/home</u> provided baby food.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula and infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided low iron-fortified infant formula and <u>parent</u> provided baby food.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file for low-iron formula.	No—center/ home did not provide at least one of the required components.	Yes <sup>1</sup> —must have <i>Medical Exception Statement</i> on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	No—center/ home did not provide at least one of the required components.

<sup>1</sup>Day care home parents must complete and sign the *Infant Formula/Food Notification Waiver* when the parent is providing the formula/breast milk/food as indicated.

Special Note: All child care institutions must have an *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification* on file for all infants in their care.