



Nutrition Requirements for Head Start Classrooms and Family Child Care Homes

Head Start recognizes the important role nutrition plays in a child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth. Nutrition and physical activity also play a role in good dental health and in the prevention of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer.

The goal is to help ensure that children have the opportunity to eat nutritious foods that promote proper growth, to offer experiences that will teach healthy eating habits, to reinforce choices and habits that prevent disease and support a lifetime of good health, and to provide children and families with the tools to promote physical activity.

The Head Start Program will continue to provide children with foods that contribute to their daily nutritional needs, recognizing individual differences and cultural patterns. The meals and snacks offered consist of a variety of nutritious foods that are low in sugar, sodium, and the recommended fat intake as specified by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

All Head Start Centers and Family Child Care Homes comply with Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or National School Lunch Program, which follow the USDA Meal Patterns. These guidelines play a critical role in supporting the wellness, health, and development of children, through the provision of nutritious foods.

Head Start is required to follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards

1302.44 Child Nutrition:

- Meet the nutritional needs of and accommodate the feeding requirements of each child.
- Children with Special Dietary Needs will complete CF/HS-27, for special meal accommodations.
- Family style meals are encouraged.
- Provide appropriate healthy snacks and meals to each child during group socialization activities in the home-based option.

In order to ensure we are following guidelines, listed below are items not served at Head Start Centers and Family Child Care Homes:

- High sugar drinks (e.g., Kool-Aid®, fruit punch, fruit drinks, sodas, and flavored waters, etc.).
- High sugar foods (e.g., Jell-O®, popsicles, cookies, ice cream, candy, and sugarcoated cereals, etc.).
- High fat foods (e.g., fried foods, chips, cookies, ice cream, buttered popcorn, pork rinds, cakes, doughnuts, etc.).
- Artificial sweeteners or products containing them (e.g., Sweet-n-Low®, NutraSweet®, aspartame, Splenda®, etc.).
- Foods high in salt (e.g., chips, salted pretzels, etc.)
- Foods that do not model healthy food choices (e.g., donuts, cookies, cocoa puffs, pop tarts, etc.)

Children under age 5 are at the greatest risk for choking injury and death. Foods that are round, hard, small, thick and sticky, smooth, or slippery are high-risk foods often involved in choking incidents. Children are required seated while eating, and actively supervised during meal times. These items include, but are not limited to, hot dogs, popcorn, whole grapes, hard candy, etc.

Due to the many food allergies, substitutions for children with allergies are provided, and precautions are taken to ensure children with allergies **do not** come in contact with such foods (e.g. nuts, citrus, soy, etc.).

Any special occasion foods must follow guidelines listed above. Foods brought must be prepared in a commercial kitchen, unopened/sealed, and follow the Head Start Child Nutrition Policy PO-D03.