

Serving Sizes and School-Age Children

Gather the Portion Sizes Facts

The following list of questions will help you to evaluate your school nutrition environment. If after your assessment you have more "yes" answers than "no" answers, you know you are on the right track. Looking at the questions you answered "no" to would help you find a starting point for making changes. Share your findings with school administrators, listen to their issues and ideas, and then decide how to proceed.

In the Cafeteria	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do school breakfast and school lunch (NSLP) meals meet USDA nutrition standards?* • Are entrées no larger than the minimum required by the USDA? • Are there sufficient choices of nutritious appealing foods in portion sizes appropriate for different age groups? • Are larger than required portions of fruits and vegetables offered? • Are desserts offered in small portion sizes (see standards below)? • Are beverage sales limited to water, low-fat or nonfat (1% or less fat) flavored and unflavored milk, and 100% fruit and vegetable juice? • Are fruit and vegetable juice serving sizes no larger than 8 ounces for elementary and 12 ounces for middle/high schools? • Are a la carte sales prohibited in elementary schools? 		
In the Vending Machines	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there restricted hours on vending machines? • Are vending machines prohibited in elementary schools? • Are beverage sales limited to water, low-fat or nonfat (1% or less fat) flavored and unflavored milk, and 100% fruit and vegetable juice? • Are fruit and vegetable juice serving sizes no larger than 8 ounces for elementary and 12 ounces for middle/high schools? • Are fresh or dried fruits available in the vending machines? • Are snack serving sizes limited to those that meet the standards listed below? • Are the sizes of soft drinks served limited to 12-oz. cans? 		
At Snack Bars or Concession Stands	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are foods of low nutritive value only on sale after school? • Are snack bars prohibited in elementary schools? • If entrees and side dishes are served (hamburgers, fries, sandwiches), are portion sizes equal to those of similar items served as part of the NSLP?* • If "combination" meals are offered, is the side dish a low-fat vegetable or fruit? • Are beverage sales limited to water, low-fat or nonfat (1% or less fat) flavored and unflavored milk, and 100% fruit and vegetable juice? • Are fruit and vegetable juice serving sizes no larger than 8 ounces for elementary and 12 ounces for middle/high schools? • Are fruits and vegetables available at snack bars or concession stands? • Are snack serving sizes limited to those that meet the standards listed below? • Are the sizes of soft drinks served no larger than 12-oz. cans? 		

Healthy Choices in the Classroom	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students receive comprehensive nutrition instruction in all grades? • Are students given the opportunity to practice skills (reading food labels, planning meals, identifying foods on menus) rather than only to learn facts? • Are active learning strategies used to teach nutrition education, such as planting a school garden or taking field trips to farmers' markets or local farms? 		
Healthy School Policies	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do school policies promote healthy food choices? Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring foods that are low in fat, sodium and added sugars be available wherever food is served. • Nutrition standards for foods and beverages offered at parties, celebrations, and social events. • Prohibiting advertising that promotes less nutritious food choices. • Curricula including nutrition education. • Limiting beverage sales to water, milk, and 100% juice. • Permitting no a la carte, snack bar and vending machine sales in elementary schools. • In middle/high schools permitting a la carte, snack bar and vending machine sales for foods for which local standards have been developed only after the end of the school day. • Requiring the availability of fruits and vegetables at competitive prices and portion sizes in any venue where competitive foods are sold. 		

Nutrition Standards for Portion Sizes

Limit portions to specific sizes:

- Snacks: 1.25 oz.
- Cookies and cereal bars: 2 oz.
- Frozen desserts: 3 oz.
- Yogurt: 8 oz.
- Fries: 1 cup
- Pizza: no more than 5 oz.
- Entrees and side dishes: portion sizes equal to those of similar items served as part of NSLP or NSBP.

*USDA nutrition standards for NSBP and NSLP can be found in the Introduction of the **USDA Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs**, which is available at <http://schoolmeals.nal.usda.gov/FBG/Introduction.pdf>