

# Infant Feeding

The Infant Meal Pattern allows for a gradual introduction of solid foods and encourages breast feeding or formula feeding up to the first birthday. The texture and amount of the feeding should be consistent with the age of the infant. For emotional, nutritional and physical growth, infants need foods that are rich in nutrients. Foods such as strained meat, fruit, vegetables, iron-fortified dry infant cereal, iron-fortified infant formula, and breast milk provide the maximum amount of vitamins and minerals for growing babies. Commercial foods such as combination or mixed baby foods are not approvable because water often is listed as the first ingredient, and it is difficult to determine from the ingredient label the actual amounts of the food components in the product.

Parents will also give you important information to help you in feeding their babies. You should communicate frequently with the parents so that you can coordinate foods served at home with foods served in your care. In this way, you can assure the best care for the babies.

Breast milk provided by the infant's mother may be served in place of infant formula from birth up to the first birthday. Meals served to infants younger than eight months that contain only breast milk do qualify for reimbursement if the provider feeds the infant the breast milk from the bottle. Meals served to infants eight months of age and older must contain at least one of the required food items. Meals containing breast milk served to infants in the eight- through eleven-month age group may be claimed for reimbursement only if all other required food components are served.

Meals containing iron fortified formula provided by the infant's parent served to infants in the four-through seven-month age group can be claimed for reimbursement only if at least one other optional food component is served. Meals containing iron fortified formula provided by the infants' parent served to infants in the eight- through eleven-month age group can be claimed for reimbursement only if all other required food components are served. If the child care facility provided the iron fortified formula, the child care facility can claim meals served to all ages of infants if all other component requirements are met.

Whole milk may not be served to infants. Consumption of whole milk can lead to iron deficiency. High levels of calcium and phosphorous and the low level of vitamin C in whole cow's milk may inhibit an infant's ability to absorb iron from other foods. Furthermore, whole cow's milk has been shown to cause microscopic bleeding and nutritionally significant blood loss, thereby promoting the development of iron deficiency anemia.

One hundred percent fruit juice is approvable only at snack from eight months up to the first birthday. Juice should not be offered to infants until they are ready to drink from a cup. Drinking juice from a bottle can promote tooth decay. Never prop a bottle or give a bottle to a baby during nap time. This can cause choking as well as tooth decay and ear infections.

When infants from birth through 11 months of age participate in the program, an infant meal shall be offered. Foods within the Infant Meal Pattern shall be of texture and consistency appropriate for the particular age group being served and shall be served during a span of time consistent with the infant's eating habits. The total amount of food authorized in the Meal Patterns set forth below must be provided to the infant in order to qualify for reimbursement. Solid foods are optional and should be introduced only if the infant is developmentally ready.

Each Child Care Center and Day Care Home participating in the program shall serve one or more of the following types of meals: (1) breakfast; (2) lunch; (3) supper; (4) supplemental food. Each meal shall contain as a minimum, the food components as follows:

### **Birth through 3 Months**

- Breakfast** • 4-6 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.<sup>1</sup>
- Lunch or Supper** • 4-6 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.<sup>1</sup>
- Supplemental Food** • 4-6 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.<sup>1</sup>

### **4 through 7 Months**

- Breakfast** • 4-8 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.  
• 0-3 tablespoons of iron fortified dry infant cereal. (*optional*)
- Lunch or Supper** • 4-8 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.  
• 0-3 tablespoons of iron fortified dry infant cereal. (*optional*)  
• 0-3 tablespoons of fruit and/or vegetable of appropriate consistency or a combination of both. (*optional*)
- Supplemental Food** • 4-6 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.

### **8 through 11 Months**

- Breakfast** • 6-8 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk and  
• 2-4 tablespoons of iron fortified dry infant cereal.  
• 1-4 tablespoons of fruit and/or vegetable of appropriate consistency or a combination of both.
- Lunch or Supper** • 6-8 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula or breast milk.  
• 2-4 tablespoons of iron fortified dry infant cereal and/or  
• 1-4 tablespoons of meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas, or ½ to 2 oz. cheese or 1-4 tablespoons cottage cheese, cheese food or cheese spread of appropriate consistency.  
• 1-4 ounces of fruit and/or vegetable of appropriate consistency or a combination of both.
- Supplemental Food** • 2-4 fluid ounces of iron fortified infant formula, breast milk, or full-strength fruit juice.  
• 0-½ slice of crusty bread or 0-2 cracker type products made from whole grain or enriched meal or flour. (*optional*)

NOTE: When serving sizes are listed as 0-3 tablespoons, 0-½ slice or 0-2 pieces, the zero in the serving size ranges can be interpreted to mean "optional". For instance 0-3 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable listed in the lunch meal pattern for a 4 through 7 month old infant allows for the individual tailoring of the component(s) for an infant requiring larger amounts.

<sup>1</sup>Meals containing only breast milk for infants less than 8 months are reimbursable.

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Food Item	Approvable		Comments	Nutritional Information
	Yes	No		
baby food fruit desserts		X	Not 100% fruit.	
baby pudding		X		
bread crusts	X		Must meet general criteria for a bread/bread alternate.	
breast milk	X		Meals containing only breast milk served to infants younger than 8 months of age are reimbursable.	
buttermilk		X		
cheese or cottage cheese	X			
combination dinners (commercial)		X		
crackers	X		Must meet general criteria for a bread/bread alternate.	
cream		X		
dry milk, (reconstituted)		X		
egg yolk, cooked	X		Only for infants 8-12 months of age.	
egg white		X		
evaporated milk includes goat's milk			Only for infants 8-12 months old. Must have a signed medical statement on file.	
fruit juice	X		100% fruit juice—for snacks only and only for 8-12 months of age.	
Half & Half		X		
Heinz instant baby food	X		Dehydrated, single-item foods.	
Heinz instant baby food		X	Whole meal dehydrated product such as meat dinners, vegetables and meats, etc.	
high meat dinners or lean meat dinners		X		
homemade baby food	X		Avoid salt, other seasonings and fat.	
honey		X	May contain harmful botulinum spores.	

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Food Item	Approvable		Comments	Nutritional Information
	Yes	No		
infant meat sticks		X		
Iron fortified infant formula (includes soy based)	X			
iron fortified dry infant cereal	X			
low iron formulas (includes soy based)		X		
low-fat milk (1%, 2%, skim)		X		
mixed cereal with fruit		X		
peanut butter, nuts seeds		X	May cause choking.	
Pedialyte		X		
raw or certified raw milk		X		
single item baby foods (commercial)	X		Such as vegetables, fruits, and meats.	
whole egg		X		
whole milk		X		
yogurt		X		

# Infant Feeding

## Questions and Answers

1. **Question:** How can you serve “0” tablespoons of food according to the Infant Meal Pattern Food Chart?

**Answer:** Certain foods are listed as “0” tablespoons to let you know that the food is optional and should be served at your discretion. Also, you may serve less than 1 table-spoon of those foods.

2. **Question:** Does an infant have to eat only at the specified meal times?

**Answer:** No. The meal pattern states breakfast, lunch, supper and snack, but that is only a guideline. Babies may need to eat every 2 to 4 hours or more frequently than the specified times.

3. **Question:** Why are some of the food portions so small?

**Answer:** The portions listed are the minimum amount required by the infant feeding regulations. You may serve larger portions to those babies who would like more.

4. **Question:** Why is fruit juice not required at breakfast, lunch and supper?

**Answer:** The use of fruit juice, in addition to the required amount of formula or milk at each meal would be too much liquid and could discourage the baby from eating solids.

5. **Question:** Can infants less than four months of age be claimed for reimbursement?

**Answer:** Only if the provider supplies the iron fortified infant formula or if the mother brings in breast milk. Otherwise, there are no additional required foods for infants under four months of age, so a provider may not claim the infant if she does not supply the formula.

6. **Question:** Are low iron formulas approvable?

**Answer:** No. Low iron formulas are not approvable on the CACFP.

**Exception:** The infant’s parents may obtain a signed medical statement from the infant’s physician stating the reason why the infant may not have iron-fortified infant formulas and the formulas to be substituted.

7. **Question:** Can infants less than eight months of age be claimed if on whole milk instead of iron-fortified infant formulas or breast milk?

**Answer:** No.

**Exception:** If there is a signed medical statement on file.

**8. Question: Can fortified adult cereals be substituted for the iron-fortified dry infant cereal for older infants (8 months of age)?**

**Answer:** No. Adult cereals do not provide infants with the same kind of easily absorbed iron as the iron-fortified infant cereals do. In addition, adult cereals often contain added sugar or salt. USDA requires providers to supply iron-fortified infant cereal up to the infant's first birthday to claim the infant's meals for reimbursement. Iron fortified infant cereal is a requirement at breakfast. However, at lunch and supper, iron-fortified infant cereal is optional.