



Smart Snacks in School

Since July 1, 2014, the US Department of Agriculture's [Smart Snacks in School rules](#) have required all foods and beverages sold separate from school meals to meet new nutrition standards. Often referred to as "**competitive foods**," because they are sold in competition to the complete reimbursable school meal, these items include entrees, sides, snacks or drinks sold during the school day in vending machines, snack bars and a la carte lines. The rules do not apply to food and beverages brought from home or sold during non-school hours, weekends or at off-campus events (e.g. concessions during sporting events and school plays).

Under Smart Snacks in Schools, competitive foods must:

- Be a "whole grain-rich" grain product; or
- Have as the first ingredient a fruit, a vegetable, a dairy product, or a protein food; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable; or
- Contain 10% of the Daily Value (DV) of one of the nutrients of public health concern in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber).

Foods must also meet several nutrient requirements:

Calorie limits:

Snack items: ≤ 200 calories
Entrée items: ≤ 350 calories

Sodium limits:

Snack items: ≤ 230 mg (≤ 200 mg in 2016)
Entrée items: ≤ 480 mg

Fat limits:

Total fat: ≤ 35% of calories
Saturated fat: < 10% of calories
Trans fat: zero grams

Sugar limit:

≤ 35% of weight from total sugars in foods

Nutrition Standards for Beverages:

All schools may sell:

- Plain water (with or without carbonation), no portion limit
- Unflavored low-fat milk
- Unflavored or flavored fat-free milk and milk alternatives (e.g. soy milk, lactose-free milk)
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice and
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation), and no added sweeteners.

Elementary schools may sell up to 8-ounce portions, middle/high schools up to 12-ounces of milk and juice.

High schools may sell additional "no calorie" and "lower calorie" beverage options, including caffeinated beverages. Offerings may include no more than 20-ounce portions of calorie-free, flavored water (with or without carbonation) and other flavored and/or carbonated beverages that contain < 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces or ≤ 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces. High schools may also offer no more than 12-ounce portions of beverages with ≤ 40 calories per 8 ounces, or ≤ 60 calories per 12 ounces.

Fundraisers: States may establish exemptions for items sold at infrequent fundraisers or bake sales.

Local Flexibility: States and/or local schools have the flexibility to maintain or establish their own more stringent standards for competitive foods, as long as they meet the minimum federal standards.



Smart Snacks in School Beverage Options

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 directed the USDA to establish science-based nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold to students in school during the school day. The new Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards will help schools to make the healthy choice the easy choice by offering students more of the foods and beverages we should be encouraging—whole grains, fruits and vegetables, leaner protein, low-fat dairy, while limiting foods with too much sugar, fat and salt.

Smart Snacks in School lays out targeted, science-based nutrition standards for beverages that reflect current nutrition science and progress being made in States and local communities across the country, as well as through existing voluntary efforts. The new standards allow variation by age group for factors such as portion size and caffeine content. While water is available on an unlimited basis, USDA has established reasonable, age-appropriate portion size standards for all other beverages in order to reinforce the important concepts of moderation and balance in student diets.

Highlights of the *Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards include:

- **Healthier beverage options during the school day. All schools are allowed to sell:**
 - Plain water (carbonated or uncarbonated);
 - Unflavored low-fat milk;
 - Flavored or unflavored non-fat milk (and milk alternatives); and
 - 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices, and full-strength juice diluted with water, carbonated or non-carbonated, with no added sweeteners.
- **Portion sizes based on age.**

Elementary schools may sell up to 8-ounce portions of allowable milk and juice beverages, while middle and high schools may sell up to 12-ounce portions. In high schools, the standards limit the maximum container size to 12-ounces for lower calories beverages and 20 ounces for calorie-free beverages.
- **Additional options for older students.**
 - The new standards provide additional beverage options to high school students, recognizing their increased independence, relative to younger students, and the wide range of beverages available to high school students in the broader marketplace. Beyond water, milk and juice, Smart Snacks in School provides additional calorie-free and lower-calorie beverage options for high school students:
 - Calorie-free beverages, in up to 20-ounce portions; and
 - Lower-calorie beverages with up to 40 calories per 8 ounces or 60 calories per 12 ounces. These may be sold in up to 12 ounce portions.
- **Caffeinated beverages remain an option for high school students.**

The new nutrition standards do not restrict the sale of caffeinated beverages to high school students. USDA encourages school districts to exercise caution when selecting items for sale to their students. USDA will continue to monitor the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) work on caffeine and will consider revising the nutrition standards in the future as appropriate.



Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

Recommended Nutrition Standards for Foods Outside of School Meal Programs

Information for Parents, Guardians, Teachers, and School Staff

Introduction

Because most U.S. children consume a large portion of their daily food intake at school, the school food environment can have an important influence on the diets of children and adolescents. Foods and beverages provided through school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snack programs must meet certain nutritional requirements to receive federal reimbursement. However, many schools also sell foods separate from these school meals—as à la carte offerings in school cafeterias or in school stores, snack bars, or vending machines—that are not subject to federal nutritional requirements. These foods are called “competitive foods” because they compete with school meals.

To provide guidance for the nutritional content and availability of competitive foods, the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which advises Congress on matters of health and science, issued a report in 2007 entitled *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*. In the report, IOM recommended that

- Federally reimbursable school nutrition programs should be the main source of nutrition in schools.
- Opportunities for competitive foods should be limited.
- If competitive foods are available, they should consist primarily of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.

This fact sheet answers commonly asked questions about the *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* report. It also offers suggestions to help parents, guardians, teachers, and school staff support schools in offering foods consistent with an overall healthy diet.

Why do we need standards for competitive foods such as the IOM Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools?

- Competitive food sources (e.g., à la carte, vending, school stores) compete with federally regulated school meals, often offering foods and beverages high in calories, sugar, and fat.
- Children in the United States are increasingly becoming overweight and obese, and most do not meet recommendations for a healthy diet. By adhering to these recommended standards, schools can help children meet dietary guidelines and reduce their risks for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other health problems.
- The school environment is one of several settings that can influence children’s food choices and eating habits. By ensuring that food offerings are consistent with an overall healthy diet, schools can model healthy eating behaviors.

To which foods do the IOM-recommended standards apply?

- These recommended standards address competitive foods and beverages that are offered as à la carte items during school meals or in school snack bars, stores, vending machines, or canteens. The *Standards* also apply to foods and beverages provided during other school activities, such as classroom parties, classroom snacks, school celebrations, fundraisers, or school meetings.
- The *Standards* are intended to be applied throughout the school day at all schools *and* after school during school-based events or activities.

Which foods and beverages are recommended under the IOM Standards?

The *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* provides recommendations for the nutritional content of competitive foods and beverages and recommends that foods be categorized into two tiers:

- Tier 1 refers to competitive foods and beverages that may be offered to students in all grades at all times of day.
- Tier 2 refers to competitive foods and beverages that fall short of Tier 1 standards and may be offered only to high school students and only after school.

The following table outlines the criteria for each tier and gives examples of foods and beverages that meet the recommended standards.

Foods and Beverages Recommended by the Institute of Medicine's

Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

For All Students at All Times of Day (Tier 1)	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, combination products, fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products, lactose-free and soy beverages, per portion as packaged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » ≤200 calories; » ≤35% of total calories from fat; » <10% of calories from saturated fats; » Zero trans fat (≤ 0.5 g per serving); » ≤35% of calories from total sugars; <i>and</i> » ≤200 mg sodium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual fruits—apples, pears, oranges. • Fruit cups packed in juice or water. • Vegetables—baby carrots, broccoli, edamame. • Dried or dehydrated fruits—raisins, apricots, cherries. • 100% fruit juice or low-sodium 100% vegetable juice. • Low-fat, low-salt, whole-grain crackers or chips. • Whole-grain, low-sugar cereals. • 100% whole-grain mini bagels. • 8-oz servings of low-fat, fruit-flavored yogurt with ≤30 g of total sugars. • 8-oz servings of low-fat or nonfat chocolate or strawberry milk with ≤22 g of total sugars. • Low-sodium, whole-grain bars containing sunflower seeds, almonds, or walnuts.

For High School Students, After School Only (Tier 2)	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any foods or beverages from Tier 1. • Snack foods that are ≤200 calories per portion as packaged, and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » ≤35% of total calories from fat; » <10% of calories from saturated fats; » Zero trans fat (≤ 0.5 g per serving); » ≤35% of calories from total sugars; <i>and</i> » ≤200 mg sodium. • Sugar-free, caffeine-free beverages with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Nonnutritive sweeteners; » Not vitamin- or nutrient-fortified; <i>and</i> » <5 calories per portion as packaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-salt baked potato chips (≤200 mg of sodium), crackers, and pretzels. • Animal crackers with ≤35% of calories from sugars. • Graham crackers with ≤35% of calories from sugars. • Ice cream bars low in sugar and fat. • Caffeine-free, calorie-free, nonfortified soft drinks.

Examples of Items that Do Not Meet the Standards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potato chips or pretzels that have too much sugar or salt (i.e., exceeding the values listed above). • Cheese crackers that have too much fat or sodium. • Breakfast or granola bars that have too much fat or sugar. • Ice cream products that have too much fat or sugar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cake, cupcakes, or cookies with too much sugar or salt. • Fortified sports drinks or fortified water. • Gum, licorice, or candy. • Fruit smoothies with added sugar. • Regular colas or sodas with sugar or caffeine.

Additional Standards for Foods and Beverages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make plain, drinkable water available throughout the school day at no cost to students. • Offer sports drinks only to student athletes engaged in school sport programs involving vigorous activity for more than 1 hour. • Foods and beverages should not be used as rewards or discipline for academic performance or behavior. • Reduce marketing of Tier 2 foods and beverages in high schools. • Encourage the use of Tier 1 foods and beverages for fundraising activities both during and after school at elementary and middle schools. Allow Tier 1 and 2 foods and beverages for fundraising activities at high schools. • Allow both Tier 1 and 2 foods and beverages for evening and community school activities involving adults.

Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

Do the IOM Standards apply to bag lunches or snacks that students bring from home?

The *Standards* do not address foods or beverages that individual students bring from home. However, they do apply to snacks and drinks brought in for an entire classroom of students, such as for class parties, birthday celebrations, or similar events.

Do the IOM Standards call for snacks to be removed from schools?

No, but they do recommend that if competitive foods are available, they should consist primarily of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.

What can parents, guardians, teachers, and school staff do to support these recommended standards and help schools model and reinforce healthy eating behaviors?

- Become familiar with the IOM Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools.
- Find out which snacks and drinks offered outside the school meal programs are available to students in your school's cafeteria, stores, vending machines, and during classroom and afterschool activities, and compare them to the *Standards*.
- Share information about the IOM recommendations at parent-teacher organization meetings and similar events.
- Identify foods and non-food options (such as pencils, stickers, or other small prizes) that might be best for classroom celebrations, classroom awards, and other school-based activities.
- Promote alternatives to candy that can be sold for school fundraisers, such as flower bulbs, fruits, books, or candles.
- Educate students about nutrition so they can
 - » Become advocates for promoting healthy options in schools.
 - » Recognize the importance of a healthy school environment.
 - » Make healthy food and beverage choices throughout the school day.
- Encourage school administrators to bring district and school nutrition policies into alignment with the *Standards*.

Resources

- Stallings VA, Yaktine AL, editors. *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2007. Available at www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx.
- Food and Nutrition Service. *Changing the Scene—Improving the School Nutrition Environment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2000. Available at <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/changing.html>.
- CDC. *Healthy Youth: Nutrition and the Health of Young People*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2007. Available at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/facts.htm.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2005. Available at www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/default.htm.

Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

Standards for Food Content

- Standard 1:** Snacks, foods, and beverages meet the following criteria for dietary fat per portion as packaged
- No more than 35% of total calories from fat.
 - Less than 10% of total calories from saturated fats.
 - Zero trans fat (≤ 0.5 g per serving).
- Standard 2:** Snacks, foods, and beverages provide no more than 35% of calories from total sugars per portion as packaged. Exceptions to the standard are:
- 100% fruits and fruit juices in all forms without added sugars.
 - 100% vegetables and vegetable juices without added sugars.
 - Unflavored nonfat and low-fat milk and yogurt; flavored nonfat and low-fat milk can contain no more than 22 g of total sugars per 8-oz portion, and flavored nonfat and low-fat yogurt can contain no more than 30 g of total sugars per 8-oz serving.
- Standard 3:** Snack items are 200 calories or less per portion as packaged and à la carte entrée items do not exceed calorie limits on comparable National School Lunch Program items.
- Standard 4:** Snack items meet a sodium content limit of 200 mg or less per portion as packaged or 480 mg or less per entrée portion as served à la carte.
- Standard 5:** Beverages containing nonnutritive sweeteners are only allowed in high school after the end of the school day.
- Standard 6:** Foods and beverages are caffeine-free, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.

Standards for the School Day

- Standard 7:** Foods and beverages offered during the school day are limited to those in Tier 1.
- Standard 8:** Plain, potable water is available throughout the school day at no cost to students.
- Standard 9:** Sports drinks are not available in the school setting except when provided by the school for student athletes participating in sport programs involving vigorous activity of more than 1 hour's duration.
- Standard 10:** Foods and beverages are not used as rewards or discipline for academic performance or behavior.
- Standard 11:** Minimize marketing of Tier 2 foods and beverages in the high school setting by
- Locating Tier 2 food and beverage distribution in low student traffic areas.
 - Ensuring that the exterior of vending machines does not depict commercial products or logos or suggest that consumption of vended items conveys a health or social benefit.

Standards for the After-School Setting

- Standard 12:** Tier 1 snack items are allowed after school for activities for elementary and middle schools. Tier 1 and Tier 2 snacks are allowed after school for high school.
- Standard 13:** For on-campus fundraising activities during the school day, Tier 1 foods and beverages are allowed for elementary and middle schools; Tier 1 and 2 foods and beverages are allowed for high schools. For evening and community activities that include adults, Tier 1 and 2 foods and beverages are encouraged.





Fundraisers and Smart Snacks: Foods Not Intended for Consumption at School

The Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards apply to any foods sold to students during the school day on the school campus, including foods sold as fundraisers.

What can we sell for a fundraiser? If the item being sold is a nonfood item or a food item that meets the Smart Snacks standards, it can be sold anytime. State agencies can permit occasional exempt fundraisers, allowing the sale of foods that do not meet the standards. Organizations planning fundraisers should work with their school administration before initiating a fundraiser to ensure compliance with the Local Wellness Policy, Smart Snacks standards, and any other local policies that may be in place.

What if the foods do not meet the standards? Generally, foods that do not meet the standards cannot be sold to students on campus during the school day. Organizations planning fundraisers of foods that do not meet the standards must work with their school administration to determine if their fundraiser can be allowed as one of the school's limited exempt fundraisers. It is important to remember that the standards do not apply during nonschool hours, on weekends, and at off-campus fundraising events, though local policies may still apply.

No more frozen pizza sales? No more cookie dough? No more Thin Mints®* cookies? Not necessarily! Many extracurricular programs, such as the school band, sports teams, and the school choir as well as youth-based community organizations such as the scouting programs rely on fundraisers to support their activities. There are ways that these groups can continue to raise money on campus under the standards, if allowed under local policies and approved by the school administration.

First, remember that *all* fundraising activities that take place outside of school are exempt from Smart Snack Standards. Just double-check your Local School Wellness Policy to see if other local school policies are in place!

Sale of frozen pizza, cookie dough and other items preordered and distributed in a precooked state or in bulk quantities (multiple servings in a package) for consumption at home is not required to meet the standards. For example, boxes of preordered Girl Scout cookies intended for consumption at home would not be subject to the standards. Students could take orders and deliver them during the school day for consumption outside of school.

Can we take fundraising orders at school? Yes. Orders may be taken at school as long as the foods being sold meet the Smart Snacks standards or are not intended to be consumed on campus during school hours and as long as students receive permission from the school.

Can we deliver the preordered fundraising items at school? Foods that have been purchased through a fundraiser may be delivered on the school campus during the school day if the foods being sold meet the standards or are not intended to be consumed on campus during school hours and as long as students receive permission from the school. However, we encourage

organizations to deliver the foods at a time when parents and caregivers are more likely to be present to collect the items, for example, during specific drop off or pickup times.

Can we sell individual food items that students can eat during the school day? If the foods being sold meet the standards, then you may sell them during the day. However, when the fundraiser includes the sale of food items that do not meet the standards, for example, a doughnut or a candy bar, the fundraiser must be considered an approved exempt fundraiser in accordance with the State agency. The fundraising organization, such as the school band, could then sell doughnuts or candy to students during the allocated exempt fundraising period.

Communication between youth-based organizations and school administration is critical when planning fundraising events on school campus during the school day.

Need more information? We offer a number of tools and resources to help school staff, parents, and students navigate fundraising tactics including the following:

- **Memorandum: Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards and Exempt Fundraisers**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP36-2014os.pdf>
- **Issue Brief: Fundraisers**
http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods_fundraisers.pdf
- **Healthy Fundraising (*USDA Healthy Meals Resource System*)**
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/local-wellness-policy-resources/wellness-policy-elements/healthy-fundraising>

Other policy guidance and resource materials on Smart Snacks may be found at the Food and Nutrition Service website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-smart-snacks>.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

*Mention of companies or commercial products does not imply recommendation or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture over others not mentioned or shown.