

TIPS FOR PARENTS

SCHOOL LUNCHES GET A MAKEOVER

Exciting news! The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently updated the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. The National School Lunch Program provides meals to tens of millions of children each day, accounting for a significant portion of students' recommended daily calorie needs. [1] In exchange for participating in the program, which sets minimum nutrition guidelines for meals, schools receive a reimbursement for each qualifying meal provided in school. Beginning in school year 2014-2015, nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside of school meal programs, including items sold in vending machines, school stores, and cafeteria a la carte lines go into effect.

Why updated school lunch standards?

You've probably heard the facts before: Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in the United States have tripled. [2] Today, more than 23 million children and teens are overweight or obese, which places them at increased risk for serious diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. [3] Ensuring that school meals are healthy and in line with current nutrition science is important for kids' health as well as for academics. Research shows that students who do not have reliable, healthy meals in kindergarten are noticeably behind their peers in reading and math by the third grade. [4]

In response, the USDA recently updated school nutrition standards, and school nutrition programs across the country are working to make school lunches healthier.

How you can help support healthier school lunches

SEE THE IMPROVEMENTS to school lunches firsthand; have lunch with your child.

REVIEW THE SCHOOL MENU or ask your child what is being served.

CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT to find out how you can support the healthy school meals.

- Engage other parents to support the school nutrition program.
- Offer to organize a taste test for new recipes and foods.
- Join your school's wellness policy or health committee (or start one).
- Point your school food service program toward technical assistance and training opportunities (see <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/best-practices> or <http://www.nfsmi.org/>).
- Serve your child more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains at home so they are familiar with them at school.

CONGRATULATE YOUR SCHOOL on the hard work they've put in to improving the nutritional quality of school meals for our kids!

FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/healthierschoolday • www.healthyschoolfoodsnow.org • www.schoolfoods.org

[1] Gleason P, Suitor C. Food for Thought: Children's Diets in the 1990s. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2001. [2] Ogden C, Carroll M, Curtin L, Lamb M, Flegal K. "Prevalence of High Body Mass Index in US Children and Adolescents, 2007–2008." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2010, vol. 303 (3), pp. 242–249. [3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Overweight and Obesity: Health Consequences," www.cdc.gov/obesity/causes/health.html (accessed February 3, 2011) [4] Diana F. Jyoti, Edward A. Frongillo, and Sonya J. Jones, "Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills," *Journal of Nutrition* 135, no. 12 (2005): 2831–2839.) Tipsheets courtesy of the NANA Coalition

JOIN US!

Join the MomsRising Good Food Force!

Get the word out about healthy school foods, junk food marketing to kids, and strategies that are working to reduce childhood obesity. <http://moms.ly/GoodFoodForce>

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