



Frequently Asked Questions

Things that families, teachers and principals might ask...

Q. Does eating breakfast every day really make a difference for students?

A. Students who eat breakfast are able to pay attention longer, demonstrate better behavior in the classroom, have improved attendance and less tardiness, and make fewer trips to the school nurse.

Q. What is the connection between eating smart and learning?

A. When a student eats a nutritious meal, he or she is ready to learn. Distracting symptoms like headache and stomachache are eliminated and attention can be focused on important classroom activities.

Q. I know my school serves lunch. Do they also serve breakfast?

A. Most North Carolina schools serve breakfast every school day.

Q. Isn't school breakfast only available to students who qualify for free or reduced price meals?

A. The national School Breakfast Program is a federally funded program available to all schools. All children can participate. Some students do qualify for free or reduced price meals, and others may pay a small fee.

Q. What is offered for school breakfast?

A. School breakfast includes a choice of entrée, fruit or 100% juice, and low fat or fat free milk.

Q. Is school breakfast healthy?

A. Meals served under the School Breakfast Program must, by federal law, meet nutrition regulations based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Meals served as part of the School Breakfast Program provide one-fourth or more of the daily recommended levels for key nutrients that children need for growth and development. School breakfasts are an excellent source of protein, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron. They are low in fat, sodium (salt) and sugar. No more than 30% of calories can come from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat. Foods are often baked, not fried, made with low fat or lean ingredients, and include whole grains, fruit or 100% juice, and low fat or fat free milk that make each meal balanced and nutritious.

Q. Doesn't school breakfast contribute to the problem of overweight children in North Carolina?

A. No. There are many factors causing the problem of overweight and obese children in our state. Of all the factors, there are several that seem to have the biggest impact: lack of physical activity; too much TV; too many soft drinks; out-of-control portion sizes; too many meals away from home; and not enough fruits and vegetables. School meals provide an opportunity to address some of these problems. Studies have shown that children who eat breakfast on a regular basis are less likely to be overweight. Many of the items offered as part of the School Breakfast Program are low in fat, sugar and sodium (salt) and are offered in portion sizes that are appropriate for children.

Q. Isn't it better for students to eat breakfast at home rather than eat breakfast at school?

A. Studies show that students who eat breakfast at school, closer to academic instruction and testing time, perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.





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Q. Do school meals offer choices for my child?

A. Schools plan menus to offer a variety of choices within a food category or group (meat/meat alternate, bread/grain, fruit/vegetable and milk) to try to appeal to different tastes. This offers students the opportunity to select what they like to eat. If the school does not have the "Offer versus Serve" option, students are required to select one item from each of the food categories.

Q. What is Offer versus Serve?

A. "Offer versus Serve" (OVS) lets students turn down foods they do not plan to eat. This helps reduce waste by not making students take food that they don't like or won't eat. "Offer versus Serve" gives students flexibility. Meals still meet federal nutrition standards. Depending on how menus are planned in the school, a set number of food groups are offered. Students must select a certain number of food groups for a school meal. The number of food groups that are offered and the number the student can decline varies.

Q. How safe are school meals?

A. Very safe. Food safety training is required for Child Nutrition professionals. School kitchens are subject to two health inspections each year conducted by the local health department.

Q. How does the Child Nutrition program contribute to student success?

A. The Child Nutrition program, also known as school meals, is an important part of the educational day. Healthy school meals can play a role in student success and allow students to perform their best. The primary purpose of the program is to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children.

Q. How is the Child Nutrition program funded?

A. Child Nutrition (CN) programs, operating on a non-profit basis, receive federal funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as reimbursement for the service of meals meeting specific meal patterns. In addition, local CN programs must generate revenue to pay for food, supplies, equipment, indirect costs and salaries. North Carolina is one of the few states in the country that provides no state funding for Child Nutrition programs.

Q. How is the price for school meals determined?

A. Local school boards set the prices for school meals. USDA partially reimburses schools for meals served to students. USDA reimbursement varies for full price, reduced price and free meals.

Q. Why are there different prices for adult and student meals?

A. Schools do not receive USDA reimbursement for adult meals. Therefore, the cost set for adult meals must cover the complete cost of the meal.

Q. What are reimbursable meals?

A. USDA reimburses schools for meals that meet specific meal patterns and nutrition guidelines. USDA nutrition guidelines are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. School systems have different options for developing menus with reimbursable meals. Each meal will be some combination of a meat/meat alternate, bread/grain, fruit/vegetable and milk. For example, breakfast could include whole grain cereal, toast, banana and low fat or fat free milk.

