

AAFES Hot Lunch Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Are Exchange school meals healthy?

Yes. Exchange school meals must meet nutritional guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). School meals contribute important nutrients such as calcium, vitamin A, vitamin C and iron. The school meals when analyzed must be less than 30% fat with less than 10% saturated fat. School meals encourage fruit, vegetable and milk consumption for the nutrients that are often deficient in our diets.

How much do Exchange school meals cost? The prices are:

- Lunch
- Students Eligible for Free Meals - No charge
- Students Eligible for Reduced Priced Meals - \$0.30
- Elementary Students Paying Full Price - \$1.25
- Students Eligible for Free Meals - No charge
- Students Eligible for Reduced Price Meals - \$0.40
- Elementary Students Paying Full Price - \$2.40
- Secondary Students Paying Full Price - \$2.55
- Non-Students - \$5.00
- Lunch Plus Additional Entrée - \$1.00

How can school meals be purchased?

For your convenience, Exchange has a variety of ways students can purchase their school meals.

Exchange utilizes the Horizon "Fastlane" Point of Sale School pre-payment system in all-Exchange operated schools in the Pacific and Europe. Parents or students can place any desired amount of money into their account and can set daily spending limits; once an account is set up, deposits can either be made at the school (during cafeteria operational hours) or at the Exchange PX / BX Cashier Cage. School meals and ala carte items can also be purchased with cash.

How do I find out if my family is eligible for free or reduced price meals?

Eligibility applications for free and reduced price meals are handled through the military community on your Installation. Check with your Community Service Division for the proper procedure. If your family is approved for free or reduced price meals, your child's account will be set up to reflect free or reduced price meals and charged accordingly in the Fastlane system.

What is the ala carte service?

In addition to our regular school meal service, DAS offer a variety of food items and beverages for sale to MS students and school staff. Ala carte items can be purchased to supplement bag lunches from home or the regular school meal, and by middle school students who do not want to purchase the pattern school lunch meal. Check with the school on your Installation to find out which ala carte food items and beverages they offer. Ala carte items can be purchased through the Fastlane pre-paid accounts or with cash.

What if my child has no money for lunch?

School cafeteria staff will make special meal arrangements to feed your child and notify you of the situation. In most cases, the student will receive a regular school meal with instructions on the proper repayment method. Please see your local school cafeteria manager for further clarification.

Why do the school lunches seem so high in starch?

The school lunch pattern requires schools cafeterias to serve a minimum amount of grains, fruits, vegetables and milk all which contain carbohydrates. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends increasing complex carbohydrates (45-65% of calories). These foods also contain many essential nutrients.

Why can't the milk be substituted?

Milk is a required component in the National School Lunch Program. Milk contributes important nutrients such as protein, calcium, riboflavin, Vitamin A, Vitamin D and protein. No other food or beverage can be substituted for the milk. For students who cannot drink milk due to milk allergies or other medical conditions, a medical slip from a medical authority is required with a list of approved substitutes such as 100% fruit juice.

Why do you offer flavored milk which contains additional sugar?

Studies show that students' milk consumption increases when flavored milk is offered. Although flavored milk contains added sugars, it is a compromise to encourage milk consumption to ensure students get the important nutrients in the milk like calcium, Vitamin A and Vitamin D.

What if my child is allergic to milk, peanuts, etc or has gluten intolerance?

If your child has a food allergy, please notify the cafeteria manager and school nurse. A doctor's note must be sent to the cafeteria stating the allergy. If replacing one food with another, this too must be included in the doctor's letter. For example, if the child has a milk allergy, then the doctor's note must include that milk is to be replaced with juice or water.

What happens if someone uses my child's account?

Student meal account numbers unique to each student. This number should be kept confidential and should not be shared with other students. If the number is

used by someone other than the legitimate holder, the cash register will notify the cashier that the number has already been used for the purchase of a meal for that day. This does not include ala carte items. If this should happen, the cafeteria manager will take the necessary steps to rectify the situation. A parent may always ask for a report on their child's account. To make this request, please contact the cafeteria manager.

What happens to my child's money at the end of the school year?

If your child has money left on his/her account at the end of the year, the money will be available on the first day of the school the following year. Account balances, whether there is a credit or debt, follow the student from year to year.

How do I get a refund?

If you want a refund on your child's account, you must send a letter with your signature to the cafeteria manager or you can make this request in person at the school's cafeteria.

What does "offer vs. serve" mean?

Offer versus serve was established in October 1975 when Public Law 94-105 mandated that students in high school would not be required to accept offered foods they did not intend to consume. At the middle school and elementary levels, the policy is optional. Exchange School Meal Program has chosen to extend offer vs. serve to include the elementary and middle schools. The five components of the meal include:

- meat or meat alternate
- fruit
- vegetable
- bread and grains
- milk

Students are encouraged to take all meal components but may decline two items. The meal will be counted as a complete meal and eligible for reimbursement.

If I take fewer than five items, will I be able to pay less for my meal?

No. The purpose of the offer vs. serve program is to reduce plate waste and allow students a choice in what they wish to have for lunch. The student may take everything if he / she desires. As a result, there is no reduction in price. Meals that contain less than the required three items do not qualify for reimbursement. Therefore, the cost of the food and preparation of the food must be covered by someone other than the government. To cover these costs the School Meal Program charges these items back to the student and may result in a higher price than if the student chose to take 3 of the 5 offered items.

Why is the adult charge higher than the student charge for the same amount of food?

The intent of the National School Lunch Program is to provide nutritious and low cost meals to children. Since this program is for children, there is no federal assistance or reimbursement for meals served to adults. The value of this reimbursement or assistance must not be used to subsidize adult meals. Therefore, the adult meal charge has to be at least a combination of the basic reimbursement rate plus the guaranteed value of USDA commodities (per plate) and the cost to preparation of the food. An adult should receive the same size meal as that of a secondary student for the established charge.

Are whole grain breads more nutritious than white bread?

White bread and whole grain breads are not the same thing. When white flour is milled, the outer bran layer and the germ are separated. The germ is taken off because it contains fat. When the fat in the germ turns rancid, the flour is ruined. The bran is removed because it is coarse in texture, brown in color and has flavor that some people do not like. However, bran is where the fiber is located and is lost during the milling process. White bread does not contain the bran, therefore, does not have as high of fiber content as does whole grain breads. Vitamins and minerals are found in the bran layer and wheat germ of whole grain items, but are not found in refined, white flour. Although nutrients are lost when white flour is milled, white flour is then enriched with B vitamins, iron, calcium and vitamin D. But whether it is enriched white bread or whole grain bread, bread is an essential and inexpensive source of the nutrients needed by our bodies.

Is honey better for you than sugar?

Honey is a carbohydrate composed almost entirely of simple sugars - glucose and fructose. In composition, honey differs only slightly from sugar. Therefore, honey is not lower in calories than sugar, nor is it 'more healthy' than sugar.

Why must milk be served with school lunch?

Eight ounces or 1 cup of fluid milk is a required component of the school lunch pattern. No other beverage (juice, ice tea, or soda), nor food (ice cream, cottage cheese, or yogurt), can be substituted for this required component. A variety of milks is offered at each cafeteria.

Why does my school serve only lower fat (1% and skim) milk?

Because low fat and skim milk have a lower fat content, it is consistent with the dietary guidelines to avoid too much fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet; when low fat or skim milk is offered, only the fat content changes. Low fat or skim milk has all the calcium, Vitamins A & D, protein and other nutrients as higher fat milk. The only thing missing is the fat and extra calories. Chocolate and strawberry milk are also low fat products and are offered in elementary as well as secondary schools.

What is the School Meal Program doing to decrease fat and sugar in school menus?

The School Meal Program understands parents' concerns and is continually striving to reduce fat, sodium and sugar in the foods served. Decrease in fat content by:

- Vegetables are prepared with no butter.
- Chicken nuggets, fish sticks, chicken patties, and corn dogs are oven baked instead of deep fat fried.
- Hot rolls are not brushed with butter.
- Low fat (1%) and skim milk are offered daily and in a variety of flavors.
- Menu features many low fat entrees such as low fat hot dogs and corn dogs.

Making Healthier Menu Choices:

- Menu's calories are appropriate for student's age.
- Menu is less than 30% of calories from fat and less than 10% calories from saturated fat.
- Increased number of whole grain items and fresh vegetable choices on menu.
- A reduced number of snack items appear on the menu this year.
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Why are bread and potatoes served in the same meal?

A bread or grain is a required component of the school lunch pattern. Potatoes are considered a vegetable by the USDA Food Guide Pyramid standards and meet only the fruit / vegetable requirement of the meal pattern.

What are the school lunch program nutrition requirements?

The USDA school lunch consists of five meal components: meat / meat alternate, fruit and vegetables, grain and bread and milk. Additionally, menus are analyzed to ensure they meet average weekly nutrient requirements.

ENHANCED FOOD-BASED MENU PLANNING APPROACH-MEAL PATTERN FOR LUNCH

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

OPTION FOR

FOOD COMPONENTS AND FOOD ITEMS	GRADES K-6	GRADES 7-12	GRADES K-3
Milk (as a beverage)	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces
Meat or Meat Alternate (quantity of the edible portion as served):	2 ounces	2 ounces	1½ ounces
Vegetable or Fruit: 2 or more servings of vegetables, fruits or both	Total: ¾ cup plus an extra ½ cup over a week ²	Total: 1 cup	Total: ¾ cup
Grains / Breads (servings per week): A serving is a slice of bread or an equivalent serving of biscuits, rolls, etc., or ½ cup of cooked rice, macaroni, noodles, other pasta products or cereal grains	12 servings per week ² – minimum of 1 serving per day ³	15 servings per week ² – minimum of 1 serving per day ³	10 servings per week ² – minimum of 1 serving per day ³

Additionally, our menus are analyzed to ensure they also meet nutritional requirements for calories, protein, calcium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and Iron.

Elementary	USDA Minimum	Exchange Average
Calories	664	735
Fat	<30%	29%
Saturated Fat	<10%	9%
Protein	10 g	31 g
Calcium	286 mg	520 mg
Vitamin A	224 RE	590 RE

Vitamin C	15 mg	23 mg
Iron	3.5 mg	4.7 mg

Secondary	USDA Minimum	Exchange Average
Calories	825	910
Fat	<30%	28%
Saturated Fat	<10%	8%
Protein	16 g	36 g
Calcium	400 mg	570 mg
Vitamin A	300 RE	730 RE
Vitamin C	18 mg	31 mg
Iron	4.5 mg	5.8 mg