

Infant Meal Pattern Chart

Child and Adult Care Food Program

To comply with the Child and Adult Care Food Program regulations, it is the responsibility of child care providers caring for infants to purchase all required meal components listed on the Infant Meal Pattern Chart according to the different age groups. The Infant Meal Pattern lists the amount of food to be offered to infants from birth through 11 months. The infant meal must contain each of the following components in the amounts indicated for the appropriate age group in order to qualify for reimbursement. Food within the meal pattern should be the texture and consistency appropriate for the development of the infant and may be served during a span of time consistent with the infant's eating habits; for example, the food items for lunch can be served at two feedings between 12 noon and 2 p.m. Solid food should be introduced gradually to infants when developmentally ready and instructed by the parent.

Guidelines for Infant Meal Pattern

Definitions as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- **Infant**—A baby from birth through 11 months (any child less than one year of age).
- **Infant Formula**—Any iron-fortified infant formula, including soy-based, intended for dietary use solely as a food for normal, healthy infants served in liquid state according to manufacturer's recommended dilution. Infant formula labeled *low-iron* or those specifically formulated for infants with inborn errors of metabolism or digestive or absorptive problems do not meet the infant meal pattern requirement.
- **Infant Cereal**—Any iron-fortified dry cereal specially formulated for and generally recognized as cereal for infants that is routinely mixed with breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula prior to consumption.
- **Developmentally Ready**—An infant's developmental readiness determines which foods should be fed, what texture the foods should be, and which feeding styles to use. All infants develop at their own rate. Although age and size often correspond with developmental readiness, these should not be used as sole considerations for deciding what and how to feed infants. It is important to be aware of infants rapidly developing mouth patterns and hand and body control so you know the appropriate food and texture to serve them and the appropriate feeding style to use at each stage of their development. On the Infant Meal Pattern for ages 4 through 11 months, you will see foods listed under the category *When Developmentally Ready*. If an infant is developmentally ready, you must offer these foods to the infant.

Responsibilities of Child Care Providers—All child care providers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program must purchase and provide all the infant foods appropriate for the age of the infant according to the Infant Meal Pattern Chart. This includes at least one iron-fortified infant formula which meets the definition of infant formula. It is recommended to select an infant formula that satisfies the needs of one or more of the infants in your care.

Parent Providing Infant Formula/Breast Milk—The decision whether to breastfeed an infant or on which type of infant formula is best for the infant is one for the infant's doctor and parent/guardian to make together. Therefore, parents or guardians may elect to decline the offered infant formula and supply their own iron-fortified formula or breast milk. This must be documented on the *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification*.

Reimbursable Infant Meals

- Feeding the Infant—The child care provider must feed the infant themselves to receive reimbursement. When a parent comes to the center/home to feed the infant, the meal cannot be claimed for reimbursement.
- Infant Formula—An infant's meal containing **only** formula, as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern, can be claimed for reimbursement regardless of whom purchases the formula.
- Breast Milk—An infant's meal containing **only** breast milk (expressed by the mother), as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern, can be claimed for reimbursement. It is acceptable to serve the infant less than the stated minimum portion of breast milk. If the full portion is not initially offered and the infant drinks all of it, additional breast milk must be offered if the infant is still hungry.
A meal served to an infant that contains some amount of breast milk (and some amount of infant formula) is reimbursable as long as the total number of ounces offered to the infant meets, or exceeds, the minimum amount for breast milk/formula as specified on the Infant Meal Pattern.
- Solid Infant Foods—The decision to begin offering an infant solid foods should be made by the infant's doctor and parent/guardian. When the infant is 4 through 7 months old and developmentally ready for solid foods, those foods listed on the Infant Meal Pattern under *When Developmentally Ready* must be served to the infant. Infants 8 through 11 months are able to eat a wider variety of solid foods as listed on the Infant Meal Pattern. If a parent brings in solid foods for their infant the meal can be claimed **only** when the meal meets the Infant Meal Pattern requirements and the child care provider purchases and serves at least one of the food items according to the Infant Meal Pattern.
A child care provider may puree/grind regular food to the appropriate consistency for infants. However, a child care center must meet food service sanitation requirements to prepare infant food. If commercial baby food is purchased it must meet the specified requirements, see the following section on *Commercial Baby Food*.
- Medical Statement—If the parent provides an infant formula that does not meet the USDA definition of infant formula, or the parent wants the infant to receive cow's milk before one year of age, a medical statement signed by a physician is required in order to receive reimbursement. The medical statement must be kept on file.

Recordkeeping Requirements

- Menus—Menus designating food items served to infants must be maintained within the center's/provider's records. A cycle menu could be planned and dated for the month. A sample infant cycle menu is included in this document.
- Meal Participation Records—Meals served to infants must be recorded on the meal participation records for each meal service.
- Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification—It is required to have written notification of the type of infant formula provided by the child care provider and to allow parents to decline the infant formula purchased by the child care provider.

Commercial Baby Food

This chart will help to clarify the food items that meet the Infant Meal Pattern and are reimbursable. The food items offer greater flexibility for child care providers to make more nutritious meals available to infants. The foods are grouped by type. This is not an all-inclusive list of foods that can be offered to infants, but only those that need clarification. Refer to the *What's in a Meal?* section on crediting foods for infants for further information.

Fruit and Vegetable	Reimbursable	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Food Items		
Fruit and mixed fruit, vegetables and mixed vegetables (appropriate consistency for infant) Fruit or vegetables must be the <u>first ingredient on the jar label</u>	X	
Combination <u>dinners</u> which list fruit or vegetable as the first ingredient on the label		X
Jarred baby <u>cereal</u> with fruit		X
<u>Pudding</u> or <u>dessert</u> with fruit as the first ingredient on the label		X
Fruit or vegetable containing DHA (docosahexaenoic)		X
Vegetable juice		X
Comments	Child care providers should carefully read the ingredient listing on commercial baby fruits and vegetables. Some brands of commercial baby fruits and vegetables contain food starch, tapioca, cheese, or rice with <u>water listed as the first ingredient</u> . Remember, if a label states the <u>first ingredient is water</u> , then the product is not reimbursable.	

Meat/Meat Alternate	Reimbursable	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Food Items		
Strained baby food meats	X	
Egg yolk (do NOT serve egg whites to children less than one year)	X	
Combination meat <u>dinners</u>		X
Meat sticks or <i>finger sticks</i> (miniature hot dogs)		X
Hot dogs, sausage		X
Fish or seafood—canned with bones, breaded or battered		X
Yogurt		X
Nuts, seeds, and nut and/or seed butters		X
Comments	There are a variety of reasons the food products listed above are not reimbursable: the actual amount of meat in the product is difficult to determine, the manufacturers did not develop the product to be consumed by infants, and/or the products can cause an infant to choke.	

Bread and Crackers	Reimbursable	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Food Items		
Breads: white, wheat, whole wheat, French, Italian, and similar breads	X	
Biscuits	X	
Bagels	X	

Bread and Crackers (cont'd.)	Reimbursable	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Food Items		
English muffins	X	
Pita bread: white, wheat, whole wheat	X	
Rolls: white, wheat, whole wheat, potato	X	
Crackers: saltines or snack, matzo, animal, graham made without honey (Honey, even in baked goods, could possibly contain <i>clostridium botulinum</i> spores which can cause a type of serious food borne illness in infants.)	X	
Soft tortillas: wheat or corn	X	
Zwieback	X	
Teething biscuits	X	
Comment		
<p>The Grains/Breads Instruction which accompanies the Meal Chart for children ages 1 to 12 years is not applicable for infants. The only grain/bread products included in the Infant Meal Pattern Chart are infant cereal, crusty bread, and cracker-type products. Since infants develop their eating, chewing, and swallowing skills slowly, infants should be gradually introduced to a variety of foods during the first year of life. Not all grain/bread alternates are appropriate for them.</p> <p>The bread and cracker-type products must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour and suitable for an infant to consume as finger food. None of the products should contain nuts, seeds, or hard pieces of whole-grain kernels.</p> <p>The above bread-type items must be prepared in a form suitable for an infant's development to reduce the chance of choking. The best way to serve breads to infants is to cut it into small, thin strips.</p> <p>Do not serve honey, including that cooked or baked in products such as honey graham crackers, to infants less than one year of age. Honey may contain clostridium botulinum spores, which can be extremely harmful to infants.</p>		

Infant Cereal	Reimbursable	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Food Items		
Iron-fortified dry cereal formulated for and generally recognized as cereal for infants is routinely mixed with either iron-fortified infant formula or breast milk prior to eating	X	
Iron-fortified dry infant cereal containing fruit		X
Commercial jarred baby food cereal that is ready to serve		X
Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (cold dry)		X
Breakfast cereals—oatmeal (cooked)		X
Comment		
<p>Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (cold dry) and cooked cereal (oatmeal and farina) are not considered <i>iron-fortified, dry infant cereal</i>.</p>		

Before giving an infant a new food, check with the parents to be certain the infant has been offered the food before and had no reaction to the food. If the child is allergic to certain food(s) which prevents the child care provider from meeting the meal pattern, have a Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitutions completed by a medical physician and keep on file.

Non-reimbursable foods can be served to infants but cannot be counted towards meeting the meal pattern requirement. Remember, these food items would be fed as an additional food along with the required food items for the specific meal.

The chart below is a useful tool to determine when an infant's meal is reimbursable. Not all infant meals can be claimed for reimbursement, it depends on who is providing the infant formula/food and the age and development of the infant.

Are These Infant Meals Reimbursable?	Infant 0 through 3 months	Infant 4 through 7 months-- drinking only formula/breast milk, NOT developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 4 through 7 months-- developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 8 through 11 months-- drinking only formula/breast milk, NOT developmentally ready for solid foods	Infant 8 through 11 month-- developmentally ready for solid foods
Infant receives <u>center/home</u> purchased iron-fortified infant formula and <u>center/home</u> purchased baby food.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes
Infant receives <u>center/home</u> purchased iron-fortified infant formula and <u>parent</u> provided baby food.	Yes	Yes	Yes, center/home provides at least one of the required food items.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes, center/home provides at least one of the required food items.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided iron-fortified infant formula/breast milk and <u>center/home</u> provided baby food.	Yes	Yes	Yes, center/home provides at least one of the required food items.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes, center/home provides at least one of the required food items.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided low-iron infant formula and <u>center/home</u> provided baby food.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file for low-iron formula.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file for low-iron formula.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file for low-iron formula.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file for low-iron formula and infant cannot eat solid foods.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file for low-iron formula.
Infant receives <u>parent</u> provided low iron-fortified infant formula and <u>parent</u> provided baby food.	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file	No	Yes, must have Medical Exception Statement on file since infant cannot eat solid foods.	No

The child care provider is responsible for feeding the infant to receive reimbursement.

If a mother comes to the home to breast feed her infant, the meal cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

The child care provider is required to provide at least one of the components in at least the minimum quantities specified on the meal pattern in order for the meal to be claimed for reimbursement.

Resource: Illinois State Board of Education, Nutrition Programs

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