

Infant Meal Pattern Requirements

Iowa Child and Adult Care Food Program

Revised July 2019



The first year of life is divided into two age groups, each with different meal pattern requirements. Breastmilk and/or iron-fortified infant formula must be served for the entire first year. Infants must be held when they are fed and should never be left with a propped-up bottle since infants need human interaction, and bedtime bottles may promote tooth decay. Solid foods of appropriate texture should be introduced around six months when the infant is developmentally ready. Solid foods should be introduced one at a time first by parents, and recorded on the “Foods Tried at Home” document. Once an infant is regularly eating solid foods, all components introduced to the infant should be included in meals served when attending child care.

Serving sizes are provided as a range to allow flexibility, based on each infant’s appetite. Offer at least the minimum serving size listed on the CACFP Infant Meal Pattern chart below. If “0” is listed as the minimum serving the food is not required until the infant is developmentally ready to accept it. Infants vary from day-to-day in the amounts they will eat.

Let infants determine how much they will eat. Some infants may want less and should never be forced to finish what is in the bottle or spoon-fed. Larger portions may be served to infants who want more. Become familiar with the cues each infant uses to show hunger or fullness. To learn about infant hunger and satiety cues, refer to *Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* or the online course (40 minutes): [Responsive Feeding Techniques for Infant/Toddler Providers in Early Care and Education Settings](#).

Infants do not eat on a strict schedule. Although the meal pattern specifies breakfast, lunch, supper and snack, child care meal times may not match each infant’s needs. Instead, infants should be fed during a span of time consistent with their individual eating habits. It is not required to serve all components at one time but they may be fed over the course of the day. Foods served throughout the day can be grouped together to fulfill meal pattern requirements for a given meal or snack.

All infants must be enrolled for care. The care provider must offer to provide at least one reimbursable iron-fortified infant formula (written on the CACFP enrollment form).

INFANT’S AGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH AND SUPPER	SNACK
Birth through 5 months 	4-6 fluid ounces (fl oz) Breastmilk ¹ or formula ²	4-6 fl oz breastmilk ¹ or formula ²	4-6 fl oz breastmilk ¹ or formula ²
6 months through 11 months (until 1 st birthday) 	6-8 fl oz breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-4 Tablespoons (Tbsp) infant cereal ² , meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, or cooked dry split peas; or 0-2 oz natural cheese; or 0-4 oz (volume) cottage cheese; or 0-4 oz or ½ cup yogurt ³ ; or a combination of the above ⁴ ; and 0-2 Tbsp vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{4, 5}	6-8 fl oz breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-4 Tbsp infant cereal ² , meat, fish, poultry, whole egg cooked dry beans, or cooked dry split peas; or 0-2 oz natural cheese; or 0-4 oz (volume) cottage cheese; or 0-4 oz or ½ cup yogurt ³ ; or a combination of the above ⁴ ; and 0-2 Tbsp vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{4, 5}	2-4 fl oz breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-½ slice bread ⁶ ; or 0-2 crackers ⁶ ; or 0-4 Tbsp infant cereal ² , or ready-to-eat breakfast cereal ^{4, 6, 7} ; and 0-2 Tbsp vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{4, 5}

¹ Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both must be served (refer to parent’s wishes on the infant enrollment form); however, it is recommended breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum required amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered at a later time when the infant is ready to consume more. If more breastmilk is offered, count it as part of the same feeding.

² Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

³ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

⁵ Fruit and vegetable juices must not be served.

⁶ All grains served must be made with enriched or whole grain meal or flour. Fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereals are creditable at snack only.

⁷ Breakfast cereals must be developmentally appropriate and contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).