

Healthier Futures For Our Children: Juice Initiative

This course is about building healthy futures for our children. The information that we are going to share here is relevant to everyone regardless of whether you are a child care provider, parent or guardian, grandparent, neighbor, teacher, or any of the other important people in a child's life that we didn't mention. By connecting the meals served in a child care setting and meals served at home, we can form a nutrition partnership.

The CACFP meal pattern allows for a wide variety of foods. However, not all food choices provide the best nutrition for young children. The goals of the CACFP are to teach good eating habits and assure that well-balanced, nourishing meals are served to children in the child care setting.

The CACFP achieves these goals through nutrition education, promoting a variety of foods, encouraging child care providers to expose children to new foods, keeping up-to-date with the USDA guidelines, and by assisting in-home child care providers in making the most of their reimbursement funds.

Let's take a look at our diet and the types of foods we make available to our children. Nutrient density refers to the amount of nutrients contained within a given volume of food. So to focus on a nutrient-dense diet would be to take into consideration all the foods you consume in a day, as an example. Fresh and unprocessed foods should make up the majority of the foods you eat in a day. And by simply making sure that every day 75 percent of what you eat is nutrient-dense, you'll be able to see dramatic physical changes in yourself, as well as an almost immediate energy boost. Young or old, who couldn't use more energy?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all foods tasted great, were quick to prepare, and provided all the nutrients our bodies need? These kinds of foods are out there and they are referred to as nutrient-rich foods and beverages. Nutrient-rich foods and beverages help make the calories you consume count more because they provide a substantial amount of vitamins and minerals to nourish your body for relatively fewer calories. The term "nutrient-rich" indicates that the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been diluted by the addition of calories from added fats, sugars, starches, or sodium, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food.

The way to move to a more nutrient-rich diet is to base your plate on nutrient-rich foods and less processed foods. Work towards choosing nutrient-rich foods first, and then select the less nutrient-rich options as calories allow.

Now, on to looking at what foods make-up the nutrient-rich list...

Eat More of These: All vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, and lean meats and poultry, when prepared without added fats or sugars, are nutrient-rich foods. These are the foods that your mother probably referred to as "the good for you foods" and the ones you want to eat more of each day. Choosing nutrient-rich foods also helps ensure meals deliver essential nutrients that you need, such as protein, fiber, B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium and potassium.

Eat Less of These: Avoid or eat less processed foods like grains and crackers with added fat and salt, fruits and juices with heavy syrup or added sugar, and vegetables with added cheese or heavy sauces. These foods increase the risk of certain chronic diseases. How do we eat less processed foods? The easiest way to do this is by incorporating more fresh foods into what you're cooking, serving, and eating. That's right- stop serving and eating junk foods! If you can't stop completely, then begin by lowering the number of times you serve or eat the foods that contain salt, fats, and added sugars, or are refined grains. Stopping anything "cold turkey" is extremely difficult and can set some people up for failure. A better approach would be to start slowly and obtain success, then increase whatever it is that you are doing to be successful. Changing eating habits is a big task and it takes time.

Now that we've got you thinking about a nutrient-dense diet and nutrient-rich foods, we are going to introduce you to how Colorado is stepping up to the plate in helping to ensure all of our children have healthier futures.

Some time back, the USDA issued new meal pattern guidelines for the National School Lunch Program, and you may have heard about the changes many of our local school districts were successfully implementing for our school-aged children here in Colorado. We in the CACFP have been anticipating the release of our Program's new meal pattern guidelines to happen within the next year. While the upcoming meal pattern changes are not anticipated to be as drastic as the changes to the School Lunch Program, we do think the new CACFP meal pattern will be more nutrient focused.

Over the past year, you may have heard that the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, the administrator of Colorado's CACFP, decided to be proactive prior to the release of the new meal patterns, so they developed the Healthier Meals Initiative. It was decided that the meals being served in our state's child care homes and centers should align with the science-based advice on matters of medicine and health provided by the Institute of Medicine and that these meals need to reflect the CACFP nutrition related goals. So, the focus of the Initiative is to help child care providers in both the home and in centers meet stronger nutritional standards in the meals they serve. As you can see, there are four areas covered by the Healthier Meals Initiative: juice, grains, healthy proteins, and milk.

While these recommendations have been in place as best practices for child care homes, we are now putting a stronger emphasis on them. However, one part of the Initiative is a policy. Do you know which area? It's the milk area. It's a USDA policy for Program participation and not a recommendation.

So with the Healthier Meals Initiative areas in mind, how do we reach the end goal of healthier meals? We begin by looking at food choices being served in each of the four areas covered by the initiative, which will present child care providers and families with a better understanding of the recommendations and policy.

The first area of the Healthier Meals Initiative that we will cover is the juice initiative. The recommendation is that juice be served no more than two times per week, if at all. We'll start with some background information on a nutrition study and how the findings relate to serving juice.

In 2008, the Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS) was conducted with children from birth up to 4 years of age. This study measured the eating patterns and nutrient intakes of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers living in the United States. The major objective of FITS was to learn about the nutrient intakes and gaps of the youngest U.S. population group and to understand what foods were being consumed in the home and at child care at different developmental stages as children transition from an all milk diet onto the foods of the family.


The results of the study found that toddlers remain consistent in their dietary patterns through their preschool years. It showed that children need to be exposed to fruits and vegetables to establish healthy eating habits, yet found that the overall intake of fruits and vegetables in the children participating in the study was low. National science-based nutrition recommendations tell us that nutrients should come primarily from food and that whole foods contain naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, and other substances that are so important in the preschool years.


Based on this study's findings, the outcome of the FITS suggests that more guidance and support is needed to help caregivers better transition from feeding their babies to meeting the unique nutrition and feeding needs of a toddler or preschooler. We already know that habits developed early in childhood can carry into adulthood. Because childhood is the critical time to address nutrition issues, and by providing better nutrition guidance, we hope to help build healthy eating habits in children during a critical developmental window.



Serving juice to children who are not receiving an adequate intake of whole fruits and vegetables is a problem. Dietary recommendations put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics support Colorado's Healthier Meals Initiative of recommending that juice be served no more than two times per week, if at all, and of encouraging more whole fruits and vegetables in place of juice. Unfortunately, some of us are familiar with children whose daily consumption of fruits and vegetables amounts to what is shown on this fork. While most children consume juice at home or in other settings, limiting the juice served in the child care setting to no more than twice per week will not be depriving the children of a loved food. Rather, it can open them up to new fruit and vegetable options. We should not consider juice to be an alternative to children eating fruits and vegetables.

THE JUICE BREAKDOWN

Did you know.....

		
½ cup apple	32 calories	6.5g sugar
½ cup apple juice	56 calories	13g sugar



		
40 grapes are in 8 oz. of grape juice		
3-4 standard size oranges are in 8 oz. of orange juice		

Do you know what a calorie is? A calorie is a unit of energy. Our bodies need calories for energy. Calories aren't bad for you, but eating too many calories and not burning enough of them off through activity can lead to weight gain. When it comes to calories and natural sugar content, juice tends to be higher than whole fruits and vegetables, and research has shown that increased consumption of 100% juice is associated with increased risk for dental cavities in children.

This is the breakdown of calorie and sugar content in a whole fruit and a fruit juice, in this case it's an apple and apple juice. The quantities are the same – ½ cup – yet there's a big difference between the calorie count and the sugar content. Wouldn't you agree that a child's belly would tend to feel fuller having eaten a serving of apple instead of ½ cup serving of apple juice? And look how much fruit goes into making a glass of grape or orange juice. Eating 40 juicy grapes instead of a glass of juice, or eating 3 to 4 oranges, would certainly be more filling than an 8 ounce serving of juice. Another thing to remember: excess juice can contribute extra calories to a diet.

In limiting the amount of juice served and your offering of more whole fruits and vegetables, there's a very important nutrient boost – fiber. Whole fruits and vegetables are an important source of fiber in the diet of children and adults.

Generally, children don't receive enough fiber in their diets. Serving fiber-containing foods, such as whole fruits, provides a feeling of fullness in the belly with fewer calories than juice. When we consistently serve juice as a diet staple, children sometimes fill up on just liquids and their hunger returns quickly. 100% fruit juice can be a part of a healthy diet, but it lacks dietary fiber found in whole fruit. Improved digestive health is a major benefit of eating whole fruits and vegetables.

Have you thought about getting all the many different colors of fruits and vegetables into your meals? Do you or your children eat a rainbow each day? We encourage it but sometimes it can be challenging to get children to eat their fruits and vegetables – especially the 5 or more servings a day that is recommended. And when trying new fruits, vegetable, or other foods, did you know that it can take at least 10 exposures to a new food before acceptance? That number grows for very choosy eaters. The message we want to share with child care providers and parents is not to give up too soon! You're training taste buds, so settle in for a bit of a journey! Try making a fun game as a way for children to track their intake of fruits and vegetables.

So to make the change of limiting juice to twice per week, you might be wondering, "what kinds of produce should I be offering in my home and eating myself?" Fresh, frozen, and canned are all excellent choices. They all contain the healthful nutrients and fiber our bodies need.

Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables are all smart choices. Buy some of each to last until your next shopping trip. Frozen vegetables have as many vitamins and minerals as fresh. Many times frozen vegetables are better in quality because they are picked, processed, frozen, and then shipped. Whereas fresh vegetables are picked before they are at their peak ripeness since they have to be shipped and arrive at their destination in what we deem an acceptable condition for eating. So when choosing frozen, look for packages that contain vegetables and nothing else— no sauces and no added fat, salt, or sugars.

Here are a few tips:

- Buy canned fruits that are packed in "100% juice" or water.
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables with cold water to make them lower in salt. The same can be done with canned fruit that's packed in syrup to lower the sugar content.
- Look for canned vegetables that say "No added salt" on the front of the can and stock up on them when they go on sale.
- Cooked vegetables or ripe fruits that are cut into small pieces are easier for children to eat.

How can you help your children eat more fruits and vegetables?

Eat together. Let your child see you enjoying fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks.

Take it with you. Show your child how whole fruit is a great snack to eat at the park or on road trips. Put apples, oranges, or bananas in your bag for quick snacks. (Remember that some people find fruit easier to eat when it's cut up into pieces.)

Fix them together. Teach your child to tear lettuce for a salad or add veggie toppings to pizza.

Share the adventure. Try new fruits and vegetables together.

You may be asking why it matters what you do? Children learn by watching you. They get curious when they see you eating fruits or vegetables. Before you know it, they'll want to taste what you're having. You'll be teaching them lessons they'll use for life. It's normal for 2- to 5-year-olds to be "choosy" eaters. Help them increase the types of fruits and vegetables they like by setting a good example and serving them less juice.

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