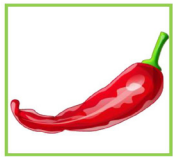


# Healthier Futures For Our Children:

## Processed Foods



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 first area of the Healthier Meals Initiative that we'll cover is the grains initiative: The recommendation is that you serve at least one whole grain item per day. Wouldn't you agree that serving a minimum of one whole grain item per day sounds very "do-able" in your home?

So, let's look at what's considered a whole grain. Whole grains are defined as cereal grains that contain germ, endosperm, and bran, in contrast to refined grains, which retain only the endosperm after milling. By consuming the whole grain, you are consuming B vitamins, fat, carbohydrates, fiber, iron, and protein.

In the case of wheat, the kernel is the seed from which the wheat plant grows. Each tiny seed contains the three distinct parts that are separated during the milling process to produce flour. When the grain is processed, it's stripped and only the endosperm is left, which only contains carbohydrates. An example of this is white flour, which is a refined grain that's been through the milling process to give the product a longer shelf life. The milling process removes the oils in the wheat so the refined flour product won't become rancid over time. When you aren't eating whole grains, you miss out on a lot of nutrients.



Let's put a slice of enriched wheat bread up against a slice of whole wheat bread. Enriched means that some of the nutrients lost during the milling process have been added back in. Some enriched grains are grains that have lost B vitamins, but then have the vitamins added back in — but not the fiber that's been lost. The whole in the wheat bread means it contains all the parts of the grain, along with all the nutrients and fiber.

Notice the big "hit" that the whole wheat bread makes over the enriched bread in the fiber category. The whole wheat bread has 75% more fiber.

Why do we care about whole grains? Well when you eat whole grains, there are some significant health benefits, such as: lowering the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, lowering the risk of developing heart disease, and you will lower the risk of cancer.

In regards to the lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease: People who eat more whole grains tend to have lower body weights and several studies have found that consuming whole grains aids in helping fight the belly fat that is linked to diabetes and heart disease. In addition, when you eat whole grains you improve your overall digestive health through the consumption of beneficial fiber. We're all aware that fiber works as nature's broom when it comes to clearing out the digestive track.

One of the issues in identifying whole grains is in the labeling. Manufacturers don't make it easy because their goal is to get you to buy, buy, buy. If you serve the whole grain by itself, (brown rice, oatmeal, quinoa), you can be sure it's a whole grain. But for bread products, it's not always easy to tell what kind of grains the product is made from. For instance, a brown bread isn't necessarily whole wheat — the color may come from added molasses or caramel coloring. If you're not sure something contains whole grains, check the product label or the Nutrition Facts panel. Look for the word "whole" on the package, and make sure whole grains appear among the first items in the ingredient list.

Think of the Healthier Meals Initiative as several stepping stones towards improvement in your diet and health. The grain initiative is just asking that you serve at least one whole grain item per day. If you want to be an over-achiever, the best practice recommendation is 16 grams and up of whole grain consumption each day.

So how do we gain "grain" acceptance? Because most whole grains are consumed at breakfast, many children are not used to eating whole grain foods. A good way to gain acceptance is to choose a few meals or snacks to introduce new grains, or you can make changes gradually by mixing a whole grain with a processed grain.

Try it with-

a sandwich - ½ white bread & ½ whole grain bread (using one slice of each type)

a pasta dish - white and whole wheat pasta mixed together

baked goods – use ½ whole wheat flour & ½ all-purpose flour

## Look for the Whole Grain Stamp

- Stamp on the right is on products containing one serving of whole grains (16g).
- Stamp on the left is on products containing one half serving of whole grains (8g)



On to the next section of the Healthier Meals Initiative, which is the healthy protein initiative. The recommendation is that processed meats be served no more than once per week. First off, let's differentiate between what is considered a processed and a non-processed meat.

Any commercially prepared meat is considered a processed meat. When we think of kids' foods, don't your thoughts go straight to the processed foods like chicken nuggets, fish sticks, sausages, and hot dogs? These are processed meats and adults have to move away from the preconceived notion that processed foods are what kids want to eat. It may be what they are used to, but not necessarily what they want to eat. And it's definitely not what they should be eating. Remember that our goal here is to have a positive impact on childhood nutrition.

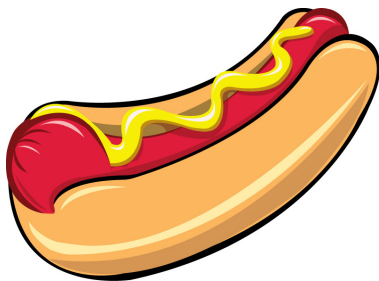
Included is a handout with a list of items that the CACFP considers to be processed meats. And on the back of the handout are items that are not considered processed meats...

Have you ever prided yourself because you baked the frozen, breaded chicken nuggets or fish sticks? No fried foods for your children, right? Well, the breaded products that the children are so used to eating have already been fried by the manufacturer and sometimes have twice the breading by weight over the meat. The frying that the manufacturer does is what gives the product its golden color to make it look somewhat appetizing when it's pulled out of the bag or box.

Fresh and frozen meat and fish can be prepared many different ways.

If you serve commercially prepared frozen meatballs in your child care, remember that they must have a Child Nutrition (CN) label on the package. The CN label tells you how much to serve of the commercially prepared product to count as a serving of meat. If a prepackaged main dish does not have a CN label, then it is not creditable and you cannot use it on the Food Program.

Now let's talk deli meats. When we state that deli meats are not considered processed meats, we are referring to the deli meats that you get from the deli counter and also the pre-packaged deli meats. When shopping, you want to look for labels that state no more than 5 g fat/per serving. Also look for the labeling "extra lean", "fat free", or "95-99% fat free".



Processed foods tend to be high in saturated fat, sodium, and additives. Our children receive plenty of fats in the foods they consume, so there is essentially no benefit from so many processed meats in their diet. Diets high in saturated fat and sodium may put children at risk of developing high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which may lead to heart disease later in life. These health effects are tough to gage because it's not as if the effects appear overnight.

Interestingly, the FITS (Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study), found that 76% of preschooler's diets were higher in saturated fat than the daily recommendation. Naturally, as children progress in age, so do the recommendations of intake for these components. Notice that this chart has two figures for both fat and sodium: the fat and sodium are listed in grams and milligrams and then those numbers have been calculated into teaspoons.

The recommendation for a child in this age range is to take in 1,500 calories per day, have no more than 50 grams of fat in the foods he eats, which is 10 teaspoons, and keep his sodium intake at about 1,200 milligrams, or just under ½ teaspoon.

Charts are great, but visuals are better at conveying the message, so we're going to take a look at three meals plated for a 5-year old. The portion sizes reflect the CACFP meal component minimum serving for a 3-5 year old at lunch or dinner.

Here you have the standard hot dog meal consisting of a hot dog in a bun, tator tots, applesauce, and 2% milk. The chart on the left breaks out the calories, fat, and sodium content for each item and then gives us a total at the bottom of each column. This meal has:

553 calories, 27.42 grams of fat, and 961 milligrams of sodium

We've calculated the grams and milligrams into teaspoons, and to make it easier to understand our point, the red plate has the amount of fat and sodium in actual product. (That's butter-flavored shortening for the fat.) The hot dog meal has 5½ teaspoons of fat and about ½ teaspoon of salt. Just this meal alone has half the fat and the entire sodium daily recommendation for a 5-year old! Wow- does that shock you?

Another thing to consider is that you have to watch the addition of condiments- mayo, mustard, ketchup, pickle relish, ranch dip...because these items will add to the calorie count and to the fat and sodium count that we've displayed on the red plate.

Our next meal is a chicken nugget meal consisting of breaded chicken nuggets, French fries, green beans, and whole milk. (You don't see a bread component on this plate because these commercially prepared chicken nuggets are CN labeled and the manufacturer has identified that the breading is creditable on the CACFP.) This meal has:

412 calories, 22 grams of fat, and 870 milligrams of sodium



The fat and sodium content for this chicken nugget meal converts to 4½ teaspoons of fat and about 1/3 teaspoon of salt. Overall, the numbers are lower than the hotdog lunch, but as seen on the red plate, not by much. And again, this lunch would probably be served with ketchup, barbeque sauce, or ranch dip, meaning that the numbers for fat and sodium would be higher.

Our next meal is a turkey sandwich meal consisting of 100% whole wheat bread, oven-roasted turkey, fresh baby carrots, sliced apple, and fat-free milk. This meal has:

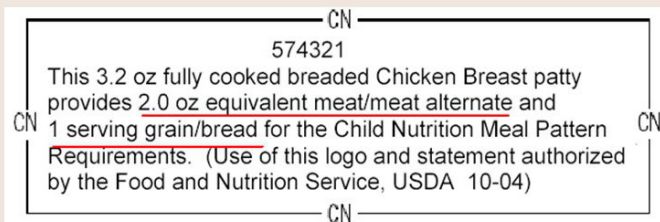
234 calories, 1.75 grams of fat, and 586 milligrams of sodium

The fat and sodium content for this turkey sandwich meal converts to about 1/3 teaspoon of fat and about ¼ teaspoon of salt. Quite a change on that red plate from the last two examples! Remember that nutrient-rich food choices, as seen here in the meal, provide more vitamins and minerals for fewer calories!

One more table of numbers to bring all three meals together for a comparison of calories, fat, and sodium content. There's quite a difference between the hot dog meal and the turkey sandwich meal—numbers were just about cut in half or cut by more than half when the turkey sandwich meal was served!

## Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

Distinct label on the product certifying the contribution of each meal pattern component in the product. Printed on the product's packaging in this format:



This comparison illustrates that with a bit of planning and using the right ingredients, we can make a difference in the effects foods have on our children. Remember that the turkey sandwich meal consisted of 100% whole wheat bread and deli turkey (and not even the low-sodium product that's available!), along with fresh carrots and apple, and fat-free milk. None of the frozen, convenience foods used in the first two meals were used, and this meal probably came together faster than the other two!

Looking into convenience foods, what we found when we went out and did cost comparisons is that, more often than not, the processed meats cost more than non-processed. Here we have a cost and fat comparison between fish fillets and fish sticks.

As usual, you end up paying more for the convenience food. Case in point for the required 1.5 ounce serving of fish for a 3-5 year old at lunch/dinner on the CACFP, the CN label on this particular bag of fish sticks states a 1.5 ounce serving consists of 9 pieces! Are you serving 9 fish sticks to each 3-5 year old when you serve this brand? While some children could devour this quantity, chances are they wouldn't eat much else you were offering on their plate.

Here we are looking at the same things, cost and fat, but we've thrown in the calorie count for each product. When you figure out the cost, chicken nuggets are almost 3x the cost of raw chicken breasts! The pre-cooked chicken breast strips are twice the cost of raw, but you still have the convenience of purchasing a product that is ready-to-go and doesn't require a lot of prep or cooking.

We are here to tell you that there is life after the commercially prepared chicken nugget! Children like these processed meats because they're used to them. You can still serve the children what they like and are used to eating, but serve it in a healthier version. This is the quick, no-measurement version of a homemade chicken nugget recipe. Look how easy the steps are! You'll find a recipe in your packet of materials for homemade fish nuggets and recipes for chicken nuggets and beef meatballs that can be made in large quantities and frozen for future use. So, for example, the large quantity recipe states that if you use 4 pounds of boneless chicken breast, you'll end up with about 72 nuggets to freeze. Then later in the week or month, you have them to pop in the oven for a quick lunch or dinner. And these nuggets never touch the oil of a fryer! After serving these homemade nuggets a few times, the children won't remember the bagged/boxed version. Have fun with the recipes and play around with the ingredients to suit your taste.



# Addendum to the Creditable Foods Guide

## CACFP Healthier Meals Initiative Policy: Processed Meats

The Colorado CACFP's Healthier Meals Initiative policies require participants to limit certain creditable processed meats to once per week. The Colorado CACFP selected these foods because they are commercially processed, contain ingredients other than meat, and are typically high in total and saturated fat and sodium. These include frozen breaded meat products like fish sticks, chicken nuggets, chicken patties, and other meats that are highly processed like hot dogs, bologna, and sausages. The foods to limit to no more than once per week, if at all, are described below. Please note that CN labels are required for products that are not 100% meat when they are served. CN labels do **not** make the product creditable and **must** be used to determine the required serving size, which must also be reasonable for a child to consume.

### Frozen Breaded Meat Products

breaded chicken nuggets, strips, or patties  
breaded fish sticks, nuggets, or patties



### Sausages

Italian sausage, Polish sausage, Polska Kielbasa, Vienna sausages, sausage on a stick, sausage patties or links, bratwurst, liverwurst, or braunschweiger



### Pepperoni, Bologna, and Salami

pepperoni (regular or turkey)  
bologna (any flavor)  
salami



### Frankfurters, Hot Dogs, and Corn Dogs (beef, turkey, chicken)



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# Healthier Meats and Meat Alternates

The following is a list of creditable options to serve in place of those shown on the reverse page. **This list is not all-inclusive**, but provides many healthy alternatives to consider.

## Fresh Lean Meat, Poultry, and Fish

ground beef- best to serve 80/20 or leaner  
(example: 93/7 = 93% beef and 7% fat)



ground beef



fresh chicken



fresh fish

## Frozen Meat, Poultry, or Fish without Bone



frozen beef crumbles



fully cooked non-breaded  
frozen chicken strips



frozen fish

## Canadian Bacon, Cured Pork, or Ham



## Canned Fish



tuna



salmon

## Lean Deli Meats (excluding bologna and salami)



turkey



ham



chicken



roast beef

## Cheese



## Eggs



## Peanut Butter and Nut Butter



## Beans, Peas/Lentils, or Legumes



## Yogurt (Plain or Flavored)





# Chicken Nuggets

CACFP Credit: 3 "Chicken Nuggets" count as 1 ½ ounces meat/meat alternate.

	36 nuggets	72 nuggets	108 nuggets	144 nuggets
Boneless chicken breast	2 pounds	4 pounds	6 pounds	8 pounds
Low-fat milk	¼ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	1 cup
Ranch dressing (low-fat)	¼ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	1 cup
Whole grain crackers	36 (1 sleeve)	72 ( 2 sleeves)	108 (3 sleeves)	144 (4 sleeves)
Paprika	½ teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1 ½ teaspoons	2 teaspoons

1. Spray baking sheet(s) with cooking spray.
2. Cut chicken into slices. Then cut into nugget-sized "pieces."
3. In a medium bowl, mix milk and ranch dressing.
4. Crush crackers into crumbs. Place crackers and paprika in a large plastic bag.
5. Dip chicken pieces into milk mixture.
6. Place a few chicken pieces at a time into the plastic bag. Seal. Shake to coat.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 until all nuggets are coated.
8. Place on prepared baking sheets. Bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes until done. Cool.
9. Place cooled baking sheets in the freezer until firm. (This keeps nuggets from sticking together.)
10. Place finished nuggets in a freezer bag. Freeze up to 3 months.

Reheating instructions:

1. Place frozen nuggets on a baking sheet.
2. Bake at 400 degrees for 5-10 minutes or until heated through.

# Meatballs

CACFP Credit: 1 meatball counts as ½ ounce meat/meat alternate.

	24 meatballs	48 meatballs	72 meatballs	96 meatballs
Lean ground beef or turkey	1 pound	2 pounds	3 pounds	4 pounds
Whole wheat bread crumbs	¼ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	1 cup
Salt	½ teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1 ½ teaspoons	2 teaspoons
Pepper	½ teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1 ½ teaspoons	2 teaspoons
Onion	½ cup, chopped	1 cup, chopped	1 ½ cups, chopped	2 cups, chopped
Egg	1 egg	2 eggs	3 eggs	4 eggs
Oil	1 tablespoon	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons	4 tablespoons

1. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Shape into meatballs. Place on a baking sheet.
3. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes. Cool.
4. Place cooled meatballs on a baking sheet. Place in the freezer until firm.
5. Place meatballs in a freezer bag. Freeze up to 3 months.

Reheating instructions:

1. Place meatballs on a microwave safe plate. Microwave on high 1-2 minutes until heated.
- OR
2. Place frozen meatballs on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes or until heated through.

## Red Beans and Rice

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2-3 Tbsp. oil
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 ½ tsp. low-sodium vegetable or beef bouillon powder
- 2 (15.5 ounce) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 ½ cups cooked brown rice

1. Cook chopped onion in oil until tender.
2. Add garlic powder, bouillon, and beans.
3. Mix in cooked rice.
4. Cook until heated through.

Recipe makes about 6 cups.

CACFP Credit: 1 ¼ cups count as 2 ounces meat/meat alternate and 1 grain/bread serving.



*Quick Tip: If you like tender beans, substitute canned pinto beans instead of kidney beans. You could also use one can of each to mix it up!*

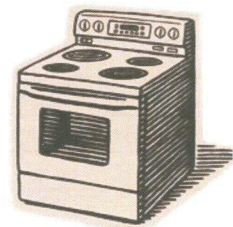
## Fish Nuggets

- 1 ½ lbs. fish fillets, such as tilapia or haddock
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup corn flake cereal, whole grain crackers of any flavor, or pretzels, crushed
- ½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- Seasonings of choice - salt, pepper, poultry seasoning

1. Spray baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Cut fish into 18 nugget-sized pieces.
3. In a small bowl, beat egg with a fork.
4. Place crushed breading, cheese, and seasonings in a large plastic bag.
5. Dip fish pieces into egg.
6. Place a few fish pieces at a time into the plastic bag. Shake to coat.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 until all nuggets are coated.
8. Place on prepared baking sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 17-20 minutes until done.

Recipe makes approximately 18 nuggets.

CACFP Credit: 3 "Fish Nuggets" count as 1 ½ ounces meat/meat alternate.





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