

# Reducing Added Sugars at School Breakfast

Grades Kindergarten Through 12



270mg  
**Total Carbohydrate** 29g  
Dietary Fiber 1g  
**Total Sugars** 5g  
Includes 4g Added Sugars  
**Protein** 6g  
Vitamin D 25%  
Calcium 10%  
Iron 16.2mg  
Potassium 94mg



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# Added Sugars at School Breakfast

Breakfasts offered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) School Breakfast Program (SBP) are an important source of whole grains, fruits, and low-fat or fat-free milk for school-aged children. Schools also have the option to offer vegetables, meats, and meat alternates at breakfast. Beginning in School Year (SY) 2025 (July 1, 2025), schools will be required to limit the added sugars in breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk to further align school breakfasts with the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025*.<sup>1</sup> In addition, beginning in SY 2027 (July 1, 2027), an added sugars weekly limit will be implemented.<sup>2</sup> See pages 9–10 for more information.

Added sugars include sugars that are added to foods and drinks, foods packaged as sweeteners (such as table sugar, syrups, and honey), and some types of sugar from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. In SY 2014–2015, school breakfasts included

**The amount of added sugars in a food is often written in grams.**



4 grams of  
added sugars



= 1 teaspoon of  
added sugars

an average of 22 grams or 88 calories from added sugars (17 percent of calories from added sugars).<sup>3</sup> Reducing added sugars in school breakfasts is one way to increase healthy dietary behaviors among school-aged children.

Helping children develop a healthy eating pattern that is lower in added sugars is important to their health and well-being, both now and later in life. Obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases are associated with eating patterns that are higher in added sugars.

Less than

**10%**

from added sugars



The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025*, recommends that all Americans ages 2 and older consume less than 10 percent of their total calories per day from added sugars.<sup>1</sup>

There is not much room for extra calories from added sugars in children's eating patterns. For example, if a 14-year-old boy requires 2,000 calories per day, less than 200 of those calories (50 grams) should come from added sugars.

Approximately three out of four school-age children are eating and drinking too much added sugar each day.<sup>1</sup> Everyone, including schools, parents, and caregivers, can play a role in helping children have access to lower sugar options at meals and snacks. Making these options available to children will help them get the nutrients they need, without consuming too many calories.



**Three out of four** school-age children are eating and drinking too much added sugar each day.

# How To Determine Added Sugars in Foods and Drinks

You can use tools such as the Nutrition Facts label, ingredient list, and nutrient analysis software to determine added sugars in a food or drink.

# The Nutrition Facts Label

The Nutrition Facts label is required to be on most packaged foods and drinks. You can use this label to determine the amount of added sugars per serving.<sup>5</sup>

### Example: Breakfast Cereal

**1 cup** of this cereal provides  
**8 grams (g) of added sugars.**



## What is the difference between “Total Sugars” and “Added Sugars”?



There are naturally occurring sugars and added sugars. As shown in the diagram above, total sugars are equal to the amount of naturally occurring sugars plus the amount of added sugars in a food. Naturally occurring sugars are part of the food as it is found in nature (such as a fruit on the tree or milk from a cow). By contrast, added sugars are added to a food or drink during food preparation or processing. Added

sugars provide calories, but little to no vitamins or minerals. For example, an apple naturally contains the sugar fructose, as well as other nutrients, such as fiber and vitamin C. Fructose, which forms in the apple as it grows, is a naturally occurring sugar. If you were to sprinkle cinnamon sugar on the apple slices before eating, the cinnamon sugar would be considered an added sugar.



## The Ingredient List

The ingredient list on packaged foods and drinks will indicate if added sugars are in the product. Ingredients are listed in **descending order by weight**, so the ingredient that weighs the most in the product is listed first, and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last. If an added sugar is one of the first five ingredients, the product is likely to be high in added sugars. Some foods and drinks may have more than one source of added sugars, which can indicate a food item is higher in added sugars.

There are many **names for added sugars**, and some common ones you may see on the ingredient list include:

- anhydrous dextrose
- brown sugar
- coconut sugar
- confectioners or powdered sugar
- corn syrup
- corn syrup solids
- dextrose
- fructose
- high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS)
- honey
- lactose
- maltose
- maple syrup
- nectars (e.g., agave nectar, peach nectar, pear nectar)
- sugar

### Ingredients:

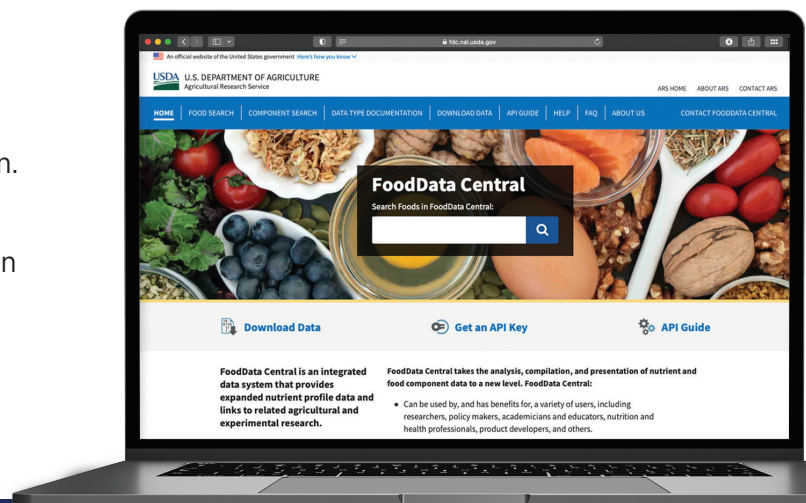
Whole-Grain Wheat, Rice Flour, **Sugar**, Polydextrose, Canola Oil, Maltodextrin, **Fructose**, **Dextrose**, Salt, Cinnamon, Trisodium Phosphate, Soy Lecithin, Caramel Color. BHT Added to Preserve Freshness. Vitamins and Minerals: Calcium Carbonate, Vitamin C (sodium ascorbate), Iron and Zinc (mineral nutrients), A B Vitamin (niacinamide), Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), Vitamin B1 (thiamin mononitrate), Vitamin A (palmitate), Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), A B Vitamin (folic acid), Vitamin B12, Vitamin D3.

This ingredient list shows that there are several sources of added sugars in the cereal.

## Nutrient Analysis Software

Starting in SY 2024–2025, all USDA-approved nutrient analysis software for school meal programs will be required to provide added sugars information.

FoodData Central ([fdc.nal.usda.gov](https://fdc.nal.usda.gov)) is a free database of food products, that provides information on added sugars in foods. FoodData Central is not a nutrient analysis software.



Product Formulation Statements (PFS) and Child Nutrition (CN) labels provide information on how a product may contribute to the meal pattern requirements, but there is no requirement for them to include information about added sugars.

# Packaged Single-Ingredient Sugars

These packaged sweeteners are added sugars:



Agave



Honey



Maple syrup



Granulated sugar

The Nutrition Facts label on these single-ingredient sugar and syrup products may list the amount of sugars in one serving as “Total Sugars.” These products are required to provide the percent Daily Value (% DV)\* but not the grams of “Added Sugars” on the Nutrition Facts label. Single-ingredient sugars and syrups are labeled in this way so that it does not look like more sugars have been added to the product than what is naturally present.<sup>6</sup> When single-ingredient sugars and syrups are used in recipes or as a topping, their content of total sugars are considered added sugars when calculating product and weekly limits on added sugars in school meals.

\*Percent Daily Value (% DV) is based on a 2,000-calorie diet. The % DV is different from the added sugars weekly limit of less than 10 percent of calories across the week, effective July 1, 2027.

## Example: Maple Syrup in a Recipe

When calculating the amount of added sugars, consider single-ingredient sugars and syrups as a source of added sugars. For example, if you use **1 tablespoon** of Maple Syrup (see its Nutrition Facts label on this page), then all 17 grams of the Total Sugars in the tablespoon of syrup would count toward the amount of added sugars.

### Nutrition Facts

16 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1 Tbsp (21g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>0%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 17g	<b>6%</b>

Total Sugars 17g  
**34%†**

<b>Protein</b> 0g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 0mg	0%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

† One serving adds 17g of sugar to your diet and represents 34% of the Daily Value for Added Sugars.

One serving of this syrup adds 17 grams of sugar to the diet (or a recipe) and represents 34 percent of the Daily Value for Added Sugars.



# Top 10

## Sources of Added Sugars at School Breakfast

Data from the USDA School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study showed that flavored milk, ready-to-eat cereals, and condiments and toppings are among the top sources of added sugars at school breakfast.<sup>3</sup>



**1**  
Flavored Fat-Free (Skim) Milk



**2**  
Sweetened Ready-to-Eat Breakfast Cereal



**3**  
Syrups, Frostings, and Other Condiments and Toppings



**4**  
Muffins and Sweet/Quick Breads



**5**  
Granola Bars and Breakfast Bars



**6**  
Toaster Pastries



**7**  
Pancakes, Waffles, and French Toast



**8**  
Sweet Crackers (e.g., Graham Crackers, Animal Crackers, etc.)



**9**  
Cinnamon Buns



**10**  
Sweetened Yogurt

Outside of school meals, the major source of added sugars for children is sugar-sweetened beverages (such as sodas, sports drinks, and fruit drinks). Smart Snacks in School standards play an important role in limiting sugar-sweetened beverages and sweet snacks sold in schools.



# Menu Planning Tips To Reduce Added Sugars at School Breakfast

Try these menu planning tips to reduce added sugars at school breakfast. Many of these strategies are used in other USDA nutrition programs.

## Milk

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Consider offering only unflavored milk varieties (i.e., fat free and low fat) or offer flavored milk less frequently.

## Grains and Meats/Meat Alternates

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Offer grain-based desserts less frequently or not at all. These items include coffee cake, breakfast bars, granola bars, doughnuts, sweet rolls, and toaster pastries.<sup>7</sup>

Effective July 1, 2024, schools may offer grains, meats/meat alternates, or a combination of both to meet the minimum ounce equivalent in the grains and meats/meat alternates meal component requirement. There are many popular meat and meat alternate items that are lower in added sugars, such as eggs, breakfast burritos, and breakfast sandwiches. Schools can work with vendors and use the Nutrition Facts label to compare products, as well as choose meats and meat alternates that are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. For more information, refer to the “Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast” guide at [fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-meats-and-meat-alternates-school-breakfast](https://fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-meats-and-meat-alternates-school-breakfast).

## Fruits

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Offer fruits that contain no or few added sugars, such as fresh fruits, unsweetened frozen fruits, and canned fruits packaged in water or 100 percent fruit juice.

Use fruits to sweeten smoothies instead of added sweeteners. Ripe fruits taste sweeter than underripe fruits. Unsweetened applesauce, frozen peaches, and bananas are often used to add natural sweetness to smoothies, especially in combination with other fruits and vegetables.

For commercial smoothies, compare options and choose smoothies that are lower in added sugars. For more information, refer to the “Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals” guide at [fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-smoothies-part-reimbursable-school-meals](https://fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-smoothies-part-reimbursable-school-meals).



# Requirements for Limiting Added Sugars at School Breakfast

By July 1, 2025, products including breakfast cereals, yogurts, and flavored milks must not contain more than the added sugars limits below. These limits apply when serving these products for all school meals, not just at breakfast.<sup>2</sup> Read on to learn more about how to choose products lower in added sugars.



**Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce (28 grams).**

Use “Table 1: Recommended Limits for Added Sugars in Breakfast Cereals” to determine if a cereal meets this sugar limit. This table contains common serving sizes for cereal.

**Table 1: Limits for Added Sugars in Breakfast Cereals**

Serving Size Grams (g)	Added Sugars Grams (g)
If the serving size is:	Added sugars should be this amount or less:
12–16 g	3 g
26–30 g	6 g
31–35 g	7 g
36–40 g	8 g
45–49 g	10 g
55–58 g	12 g
59–63 g	13 g
74–77 g	16 g



**Yogurts must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (170 grams).**

Use “Table 2: Required Limits for Added Sugars in Yogurts” to determine if a yogurt meets this sugar limit. This table contains common serving sizes for yogurt, as listed on the Nutrition Facts label.

**Table 2: Required Limits for Added Sugars in Yogurts**

Serving Size Ounces (oz)	Serving Size Grams (g)	Added Sugars Grams (g)
If the serving size is:	If the serving size is:	Added sugars should be this amount or less:
2 oz	57 g	4 g
3 oz	85 g	6 g
4 oz	113 g	8 g
5.3 oz	150 g	10 g
6 oz	170 g	12 g
8 oz	227 g	16 g



**Flavored milk must contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces.**

The added sugar limit for flavored milk sold outside of the reimbursable meal (as a competitive beverage for middle and high school students) is 15 grams per 12 fluid ounces. Use “Table 3: Required Limits for Added Sugars” in Flavored Milk to determine if a flavored milk meets this sugar limit.

**Table 3: Required Limits for Added Sugars in Flavored Milk**

Serving Size Fluid Ounces (fl oz)	Added Sugars Grams (g)
If the serving size is:	Added sugars should be this amount or less:
8 fl oz	10 g
12 fl oz	15 g

# Checking Added Sugars in the Overall Meal

By July 1, 2027, school menus must limit calories from added sugars to less than 10 percent of total calories averaged over the week.<sup>2</sup> This means that if the menus throughout the week contain an average of 500 calories, the average calories from added sugars must be less than 50 (or less than 12.5 grams of added sugars) to meet this requirement.

Your school may use a nutrient analysis software or another system to make this calculation.



Convert grams of added sugars to calories

1 gram of added sugars = 4 calories

Grams of added sugars X 4 = calories from added sugars

Use “Table 4: Required Limits for Added Sugars Per Total Calories at School Breakfast” to find the added sugars limit in grams per total meal calories.

Table 4: Required Limits for Added Sugars Per Total Calories at School Breakfast

Total Calories for Breakfast (Averaged Over the Week)	Added Sugars (grams)* for Breakfast (Averaged Over the Week)
350	Less than 8.5 g
400	Less than 10 g
450	Less than 11 g
500	Less than 12.5 g
550	Less than 13.5 g
600	Less than 15 g

\*This amount in grams (g) has been rounded down to the nearest 0.5 gram.

## Consider the Big Picture

When making changes to your school breakfast menu, consider how your changes will also affect other meal pattern requirements, such as calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Reducing added sugars in a food product can result in the food providing fewer calories. As you make menu changes, ensure that you are still offering enough food to meet calorie requirements for school breakfast. Likewise, ensure that lower sugar substitutions are not high in sodium and saturated fat. Since the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars are averages throughout the week, some meals may be higher in any of these requirements if they’re balanced with other meals served during the week.

The following **meal pattern requirements**<sup>4</sup> may help limit added sugars:

- Canned fruits must be packed in light syrup, water, or fruit juice;
- Breakfast must offer at least two different milk options, and one of those options must be unflavored milk; and
- Breakfast must meet average minimum and maximum calorie levels.



# Try It Out! Simple Swaps

Look at the meals below. What simple swaps were made to lower added sugars in Breakfast Meals 1B and 2B?

## Breakfast Meal 1A



1 oz eq Breakfast Muffin



1 cup Mixed Berries



8 fl oz Milk, Flavored, Fat Free

**Calories:** 412      **\*Sodium:** 390 mg  
**Saturated Fat:** 1 g      **Added Sugars:** 21 g

Enter your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Breakfast Meal 1B



4 oz Greek Yogurt With  
4 g of Added Sugars



2 oz eq  
Hard-Boiled Egg



1 cup Mixed Berries



8 fl oz Milk, Unflavored, Low Fat

**Calories:** 355      **\*Sodium:** 285 mg  
**Saturated Fat:** 2.8 g      **Added Sugars:** 4 g

\*By July 1, 2027, school breakfast menus must meet the average sodium limits of ≤485 mg for K-5, ≤535 mg for grades 6-8, and ≤570 mg for grades 9-12.

## Breakfast Meal 2A



2 oz eq Cinnamon Buns



8 fl oz Flavored, Fat-Free Milk



1 cup Grapes

**Calories:** 540      **Added Sugars:** 18 g  
**Saturated Fat:** 5 g      **Percent (%) of Calories**  
**\*Sodium:** 560 mg      **From Added Sugars:** 13%

Enter your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Breakfast Meal 2B



2 oz eq Whole Grain-Rich Bagel With  
Light Cream Cheese



8 fl oz Unflavored, Low-Fat Milk



1 cup Grapes

**Calories:** 450      **Added Sugars:** 0 g  
**Saturated Fat:** 4.3 g      **Percent (%) of Calories**  
**\*Sodium:** 533 mg      **From Added Sugars:** 0%

**Answer Key:**  
**Breakfast Meal 1**  
Muffin → Egg  
Flavored Milk → Unflavored Milk  
Adding Yogurt With 4 g of Added Sugars  
**Breakfast Meal 2**  
Cinnamon Buns → Whole Grain-Rich Bagel  
Flavored, Fat-Free Milk → Unflavored, Low-Fat Milk

Remember to find other ways to reduce added sugars at school breakfast by using the Menu Planning Tips section on page 8.

# Tips for Reducing Added Sugars in Recipes

Try these tips to lower the amount of added sugars in your recipes:



If you make muffins, quick breads, and other breakfast grains from scratch, try adjusting the amount of added sugars in your recipes. Be sure to taste-test and re-standardize your adjusted recipes. Sometimes, you can reduce the amount of added sugars in the recipe by up to one-third while maintaining an acceptable consistency and flavor.



Spices and extracts like cinnamon, allspice, and vanilla can help enhance the flavor of baked goods that are made with fewer added sugars.<sup>8</sup>



Use ripe fruits as a natural sweetener. You can make fruit purees by mixing ripe fruits with a little water and no added sugars. For example, use unsweetened applesauce, pumpkin puree, or banana puree in muffins, smoothies, or waffles.

It may not be possible to remove all of the added sugars from foods, such as baked goods. Sugar can help keep foods from being too dry or dense.



## Getting Students' Input

When making any changes to your school breakfast menu, it is always a good idea to involve students in the process. Students can participate in taste-testing activities, naming new menu items, and providing suggestions for new menu options. Involving students in this way can help ensure that they like the new menu items. You may find that you can reduce the added sugars in some menu items, while offering other items that contain no added sugars. You may also choose to offer certain breakfast items that are higher in added sugars less often so that the average amount of added sugars at breakfast over the week is less than 10 percent of calories. Check out Team Nutrition's Taste-Testing Event Resources found at [fns.usda.gov/tn/taste-testing-event-resources](https://fns.usda.gov/tn/taste-testing-event-resources).



Engage students in the classroom through USDA Team Nutrition's Fueling My Healthy Life nutrition education materials for middle school students. Student articles, videos, and digital interactives about added sugars and other nutrition topics can be found at [fns.usda.gov/tn/fueling-my-healthy-life](https://fns.usda.gov/tn/fueling-my-healthy-life).



# Talking With Families and Caregivers About Added Sugars

Parents and caregivers may reach out to you with questions about the nutritional quality of school breakfasts. This can be an excellent opportunity to share information about what foods and drinks are included in a school breakfast and how they help support healthy eating patterns among children. See below for common concerns and how to address them.

## Concerns about added sugars in school breakfast foods

Share information about school breakfast choices and the amount of added sugars in them. Since added sugars are included on the Nutrition Facts label, it might be helpful to discuss the difference between naturally occurring sugars, added sugars, and total sugars in foods. Discuss what efforts your school has taken to ensure that school breakfasts are lower in added sugars. Provide links to menus, nutrient analyses, and other information provided by your food service department.

## Concerns about the types and amount of carbohydrates in school breakfast foods

Parents and caregivers may have additional concerns about school breakfast foods. For example, parents of children with diabetes may seek information about the total carbohydrate content of the meal. Parents and caregivers may be concerned about refined grains (i.e., grains that are not whole grains) and juices. While these foods may not contain added sugars, they also contain little to no dietary fiber. In addition to providing information about the total carbohydrate content of the breakfast meal, it may be helpful to share your school's efforts to offer whole grain-rich foods and whole or cut-up fruits. If meats or meat alternates and vegetables are also breakfast options at your school, share this information as these choices can help moderate the carbohydrate content of the meal.

## Concerns about high-intensity sweeteners (low or no-calorie sweeteners such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia)

Using the strategies mentioned in this publication, it is possible to reduce added sugars at school breakfast without the use of high-intensity sweeteners. Children will also benefit from learning to enjoy flavors other than “sweet” in foods. High-intensity sweeteners are not prohibited in school meals, but your school may make it a policy not to offer foods that include them. Share your local school wellness policy with parents and caregivers.

Your local school wellness policy may also include information about added sugars in foods offered at school. Share this policy and its progress with parents and caregivers and encourage them to be involved in school wellness initiatives ([fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy](https://fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy)).



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