

MENU STANDARDS: CONGREGATE AND HOME DELIVERED MEALS

Adequate and balanced nutrition is recognized as a prime component of older adults' overall health and increases their ability to reduce the risk of and/or recover from disease and disability. The goal of the Menu Standards is to set guidelines that will ensure that providers offer well-balanced and satisfying meals. To assure that this goal is met, meals must comply with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture and meet the minimum requirements of the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) as established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. DRIs are values that are quantitative estimates of nutrient intakes that are used for planning and assessing diets of healthy populations. Over time, the National Academy of Sciences has been establishing and issuing the DRIs. As revised Dietary Reference Intakes become available, AgeOptions reserves the right to require menu changes to meet the most recent nutrient requirements.

Meal Requirements

Nutrition service providers must assure that each meal contains a minimum of one-third of the current Dietary Reference Intakes established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. (See DRI chart, page 7.)

Providers who plan to serve two meals on the same day must plan the meals to meet the total nutrients equal to at least two-thirds of the Dietary Reference Intakes.

Special Menus

To meet particular dietary needs or preferences that may be due to health requirements, religious requirements, ethical beliefs or ethnic backgrounds of eligible persons, nutrition service provider must provide special menus, where feasible and appropriate. Ethnic or religious menus must approximate as closely as possible (given religious requirements or ethnic background) the regular meal pattern and required nutrient content of regular meals. Greater consideration will be given to providers who plan to offer special menus to meet the needs of targeted populations.

In determining feasibility and appropriateness, the providers must use the following criteria:

1. Whether there are a sufficient number of persons who need the special menus to make their provision practical; and
2. Whether the food and skills necessary to prepare the special menus are available in the program area.

Menu Planning

Nutrition service providers must plan¹ menus in advance of service and keep the menus on file. If a cycle menu² is used, there shall be at least three cycles per year. If the cycle is at least 6 weeks or

¹ Providers who utilize a contracted food service provider must coordinate with the food service provider to develop the menus.

² Please see definitions of seasonal cycle menu and monthly menu in glossary.

greater in length, there shall be at least two cycles per year. Changes may be made to the approved cycle menu, with input from the participants and food service provider and with approval of the AgeOptions Dietitian.

1. **Unless previously approved by AgeOptions,** menus must list portion sizes for each item on the menu to facilitate calculation of the nutrient content of the meals.
2. Monthly menus must be signed and certified by AgeOptions Dietitian to provide one-third of the current Dietary Reference Intakes and meet the requirements of the contract. Menus must be submitted to AgeOptions dietitian for approval and certification **at least four (4) or more weeks in advance of service.**
3. Monthly menus should be on file at the provider agency, with any changes noted in writing, for at least one year.
4. A monthly, legible and easy to read menu, with or without portion sizes, must be posted in a conspicuous location in each congregate meal site, as well as each preparation area.
5. The menu should be adhered to, subject to seasonal availability of food items. If a change is required, a nutritionally equivalent item must be substituted.
6. Each nutrition provider shall assure that congregate meal participants are offered all the food items needed to meet the menu requirements.
7. Any participant or Nutrition Site Advisory Council suggestions and preferences should be taken into consideration when approving the menus, as long as the requirements of the grant/contract are being met.

Dietary Guidelines

The "Dietary Guidelines for Americans"³ recommends that diets be low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol and that sodium be used in moderation. This can be accomplished as follows:

1. Bake, boil and steam foods in place of frying foods in fat. Use low-fat salad dressing, cheese and gravies (made without drippings and fats). Use fats only as indicated in a low-fat recipe.
2. Salt should be used sparingly, if at all, in cooking and at the table. Use low-sodium meats, flavorings and seasonings.
3. Use whole grain breads and cereals, cooked dried peas and beans, fresh vegetables and fruits to increase the fiber content of the menus.

Acceptability

Menu variety is an important program goal. There should be every attempt to not repeat entrees or desserts within a menu cycle. An entree or dessert may be repeated if a significant number of

³ The Dietary Guidelines for Americans from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2005.

participants or the Site Advisory Council requests it. Note that fruit as a dessert is exempted from this requirement, with the understanding that there should be variety in the type of fruit served.

Individual meals should include a variety of foods and preparation methods with consideration for color, combinations, texture, size, shape, taste, appearance and temperature to maximize palatability and attractiveness of the meal.

Fresh fruits and vegetables should be offered whenever possible and/or when they are in season.

Menu Standards

Nutrition service providers who choose not to complete a computerized nutritional analysis of their menus will follow the meal pattern described in this section.

Requirements for One or Two Meal(s) Daily

EACH meal must provide:

One (1) Serving lean meat or meat alternate: 3 ounces of edible cooked meat, fish, fowl, eggs or meat alternate

Two (2) Servings vegetables: ½ cup equivalent – may serve an additional vegetable instead of a fruit

One (1) Serving fruit: ½ cup equivalent – may serve an additional fruit instead of a vegetable

Two (2) Servings grain, bread or bread alternate, preferably whole grain: for example, 2 slices of whole grain or enriched bread 1 ounce each or 1 cup cooked pasta or rice

One (1) Serving fat free or low fat milk or milk alternate: 1 cup equivalent

Margarine and dessert are optional and must be counted in the calories, fat and sodium totals, if served in addition to above components.

Meat or Meat Alternate

- Three ounces (providing at least 19 g protein) of lean meat, poultry, fish or meat alternate should be provided for the lunch or dinner meal. Meat serving weight is the edible portion, not including skin, bone, or coating.
- A one ounce serving or equivalent portion of meat, poultry, fish, may be served in combination with other high protein foods. Three one-ounce servings are needed to meet the requirement to add up to a total of 3-ounces of protein served.
- Meat (1 ounce) alternates include:
 - 1 medium egg
 - 1-ounce cheese (nutritionally equivalent measure of pasteurized process cheese, cheese food, cheese spread, or other cheese product)

½ cup cooked dried beans, peas or lentils
2 tablespoons peanut butter or 1/3 cup nuts
¼ cup cottage cheese
½ cup tofu
1 ounce of soy type burger

- Protein/lean meat /meat alternate items containing textured vegetable protein and providing at least 19 g protein in a (3 oz) serving may be served.
- Mixed entrees such as stews and casseroles generally will require a 1 cup serving (in order to include 3 oz. of the protein ingredient).
- Except to meet cultural and religious preferences and for emergency meals, serving dried beans, peas or lentils, peanut butter or peanuts, and tofu for consecutive meals or on consecutive days should be avoided. Smaller amounts of these protein sources plus, eggs, natural or processed cheese etc, may be used in salads, or as ingredients in menu items to complete the protein requirement when an entrée has less than 3 oz. of high quality protein.
- Imitation cheese (which the Food and Drug Administration defines as one not meeting nutritional equivalency requirements for the natural, non-imitation product) cannot be served as meat alternates.
- To limit the sodium content of the meals, serve no more than once a week cured and processed meats (e.g., ham, smoked or Polish sausage, corned beef, wieners, luncheon meats, dried beef).
- To limit the amount of fat, especially saturated fat, and cholesterol in meals, regular ground meat should be served no more than twice weekly when one meal is provided and no more than four times weekly if two meals are provided.

Vegetables

- A serving of vegetable (including cooked dried beans, peas and lentils) is generally ½ cup cooked or raw vegetable; or ¾ cup 100% vegetable juice, or 1-cup raw leafy vegetable. For pre-packed 100% vegetable juices, a ½ cup juice pack may be counted as a serving if a ¾ cup pre-packed serving is not available.
- Fresh, frozen or unsalted canned vegetables are preferred instead of canned vegetables containing salt. Fresh seasonal vegetables are preferred.
- Vegetables may be provided as soups, juices, salads or entrée side dishes.
- Vegetables as a primary ingredient in soups, stews, casseroles or other combination dishes should total ½ cup per serving.

- Combinations of several vegetables (i.e. mixed vegetables, tossed salad) count as one serving if the total serving meets or exceeds the standard portion.
- At least one serving from each of the five vegetable subgroups must be included in a weekly menu. The five vegetable subgroups include dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, cooked dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables, and “other” vegetables.
- Dried beans, peas and lentils may be counted as either a serving of vegetable or meat alternative but not for both groups in the same meal.
- A serving of cooked legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils) must be included twice each week, if one meal is provided; 4 servings per week must be included, if two meals are provided.
- With green salads, a 2 Tbsp. portion of low fat or fat free dressing should be provided.

Fruits

- A serving of a fruit is generally a medium apple, banana, orange, or pear; ½ cup chopped, cooked, or canned fruit; or ¾ cup 100% fruit juice. For pre-packed 100% fruit juices, a ½ cup juice pack may be counted as a serving if a ¾ cup pre-packed serving is not available.
- Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit will preferably be packed in juice, without sugar or light syrup. Fresh seasonal fruits are preferred.
- Fruits may be provided as juices, salads, desserts or entrée side dishes.
- Combinations of several fruits (i.e. mixed fruit cup, tropical fruit salad) count as one serving if the total serving meets or exceeds the standard portion.

Grain, Bread or Bread Alternate

- A serving of grain or bread is generally 1 slice (1 ounce), whole grain or enriched; ½ cup cooked whole grain or enriched pasta or grain product; or 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal. ***Priority should be given to serving whole grains***
- Grain, bread and bread alternates include:
 - 1 small 2-ounce muffin, 2” diameter
 - 2 mini muffins
 - 2” cube cornbread
 - 1 biscuit, 2” diameter
 - 1 waffle, 4” diameter
 - 1 slice French toast
 - ½ slice French toast from “Texas Toast”
 - ½ English muffin
 - 1 tortilla, 4-6” diameter
 - 1 pancake, 4” diameter

- ½ bagel
- 1 small sandwich bun (<3” diameter)
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- 4-6 crackers (soda cracker size)
- ½ large sandwich bun
- ¾ cup ready to eat cereal
- 2 graham cracker squares
- ½ cup bread dressing/stuffing
- ½ cup cooked pasta, noodles or rice
- Prepared pie crust, 1/8 of an 8” or 9” two-crust pie
- ½ cup cooked grain product in serving of fruit “crisp” or cobbler

- A variety of enriched and/or whole grain products, particularly those high in fiber, are recommended.
- Two servings of whole grain products must be served at least twice a week when one meal is provided; 4 servings whole grain products must be served per week when 2 meals are provided.
- Grain/bread alternates do not include starchy vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, yams, or plantains etc. These foods are included in the vegetable food group.

Milk or Milk Alternates

- **One cup** skim, low fat, whole, buttermilk, low-fat chocolate milk, or lactose-free milk fortified with Vitamins A and D should be used. Low fat or skim milk is recommended for the general population. Powdered dry milk (1/3 cup) or evaporated milk (½ cup) may be served as part of a shelf stable meal.
- Milk alternates for the equivalent of one cup of milk include:
 - 1 cup fat free or low fat milk
 - 1 cup yogurt, fat free or low fat
 - 1 cup fortified soymilk
 - 1 ½ cups cottage cheese, low fat
 - 8 ounces tofu (processed with calcium salt)
 - 1½ ounces natural or 2 ounces processed cheese

Nutrient Values for Meal Planning and Evaluation

The table below presents the most current DRIs and other nutrient values to use when planning and evaluating meals. Values are provided for serving 1, or a combination of 2 or 3 meals for 1-day consumption for the average older adult population served by nutrition programs. Menus that are documented as meeting the nutritional requirements through menu analysis must have written documentation, which supports the following nutrient content of each meal.

Nutrient	Amount Required	Notes
Calories (cal)	685 calories per meal averaged over one week	No one meal may be less than 600 calories
Protein (gm)	19	
Carbohydrate (gm)	43	
Fat (gm)	15-23 ≤ 30% calories averaged over one week	No one meal may be more than 35% fat
Fiber (gm)	10	
Vitamin A (ug)	300	
Vitamin C (mg)	30	
Vitamin E (ug)	5	
Vitamin B6 (mg)	.6	
Folate (ug)	133	
Vitamin B12 (ug)	.8	
Calcium (mg)	400	
Magnesium (mg)	140	
Zinc (mg)	3.7	
Potassium (mg)	1567	
Sodium (mg)	<800 averaged over one week	No one meal more than 1000 mg

Menu Approval Sheets are provided at the end of this document for use in documenting that nutritional requirements are met by the menu through meeting the meal pattern requirements or through carrying out a computerized nutritional analysis of menus.

SPECIFIC NUTRIENT SOURCES

Vitamin A

Each day each meal must provide at least 300 mcg vitamin A through foods served.

- To ensure this amount of vitamin A is provided when the meal pattern is followed, vitamin A rich foods must be served 2 to 3 times per week for one meal per day.
- When serving 2 meals per day, vitamin A rich foods must be served 4 to 6 times per week.
- One rich source or two fair source servings may be used to meet the requirements.
- Some examples of **rich** sources of vitamin A include:

Apricots	Cantaloupe	Collard greens
Kale	Mango	Spinach
Turnip greens & other dark greens		
Winter squash (Hubbard, Acorn, Butternut)		
Carrots and sweet potatoes		
- Some examples of **fair** sources of vitamin A include:

Apricot Nectar	Broccoli	Tomato Sauce
Pumpkin	Vegetable Juice	

Vitamin C

Each day each meal must provide at least 30 mg vitamin C through foods served.

- To ensure this amount of vitamin C is provided when the meal pattern is followed, vitamin C may be provided as one serving of a rich source, 2 half servings of rich sources or 2 servings of fair sources.
- When serving one meal per day, 1 rich or 2 fair sources must be served.
- When serving 2 meals per day, 2 rich or 4 fair sources must be served.
- Fortified, full-strength juices, defined as fruit juices that are 100% natural juice with vitamin C added, are vitamin C-rich foods.
- Partial-strength or simulated fruit juices or drinks, even when fortified, may not count as fulfilling this requirement, except cranberry juice.
- Some examples of **rich** sources of vitamin C include:

Broccoli	Brussels sprouts	Cantaloupe
Cauliflower	Fruit juices, fortified	Grapefruit
Grapefruit juice	Green pepper	Honeydew
Kale	Kiwi	Mango
Mandarin oranges	Oranges/orange juice	Strawberries
Sweet potatoes	Yams	Sweet red pepper
Tangerines		

- Some examples of **fair** sources of vitamin C include:

Asparagus	Cabbage	Collard greens
Mustard greens	Pineapple	Potatoes
Spinach	Tomato/tomato juice/sauce	Turnip greens
Watermelon		

- These are a few examples of vitamins A and C sources. A listing of vitamin A and C content of common vegetables and fruits is included at the end of this document as additional information. By consulting this listing and ensuring that a minimum of 300 mcg vitamin A and 30 mg vitamin C are included through vegetables and fruits in meals on a daily basis, providers will meet these vitamin requirements.

Food Preparation and Serving Recommendations

1. When cooking, use salt sparingly or eliminate entirely by using spices, herbs or other seasoning. To flavor foods, use salt-free seasoning, lemon juice, lime juice or vinegar.
2. Minimize the use of fat in food preparation. Fats should be primarily vegetable sources and in a liquid or soft (spreadable) form that is low in hydrogenated fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Limit fat to no more than 20-35 percent of the calories average for the week.
3. Each meal should contain at least 10 grams of dietary fiber. Use whole grains, meat alternatives, and fruits and vegetables to increase the fiber content of the menus. By ensuring that a minimum of 10 g fiber is included through foods served on a daily basis, providers will meet the fiber requirements.
4. Reflect seasonal availability of food.
5. Plan so that food items within the meat and meat alternatives, vegetable, fruit and grain/bread groups are varied within the week and menu cycle.
6. Include a variety of foods and preparation methods with consideration for color, combinations, texture, size, shape, taste and appearance.
7. Do not provide vitamin and/or mineral supplements.

8. Use low-sodium meats, flavorings, and seasonings.
9. Use low-fat salad dressing, spreads, cheese and gravies (made without drippings and fat)
10. Bake, broil, steam or stew foods in place of frying food in fat.
11. At congregate sites, have drinking water readily available to encourage fluid intake. Coffee/decaf and tea with low-fat or non-dairy creamer, sugar/sugar substitute must be available on a daily basis at congregate sites.
12. Desserts may be provided as an option to satisfy the caloric requirements or for additional nutrients. Desserts such as fruit, whole grains, low fat or low sugar products are encouraged. Fresh, frozen, or canned fruits packed in their own juice are encouraged often as a dessert item, in addition to the serving of fruit provided as part of the meal. However, if a dessert contains at least ½ cup of fruit it may be counted as a serving of fruit. A dessert containing at least ½ cup enriched/whole grain product may be counted as a serving of grain. For example, a serving of two-crust (approx. 1/8 of an 8” or 9” pie) fruit pie that contains at least ½ cup fruit is counted as one serving fruit and one serving grain.
13. Ethnic or religious menus must approximate as closely as possible (given religious requirements or ethnic background) the regular meal pattern and nutrient content of meals as previously stated.
14. Meals served in accordance with the meal standards are appropriate for persons with chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.
15. Each nutrition provider shall assure that congregate meal participants are offered all the food items needed to meet the menu requirements.

**Menu Approval Sheet
for use with Meal Pattern for
AgeOptions Title IIIC Nutrition Programs**

Refer to Menu Standards for portion sizes, frequency and nutrient content. Minimum and maximum amounts indicated are for one week of menus.

Food Group	Total - 1 Meal per Day		Total - 2 Meals per Day		Total - 3 meals per Day	
	Minimum	Check	Minimum	Check	Minimum	Check
Meat, Eggs, Legumes	3 oz or equivalent		6 oz or equivalent		6 oz or equivalent	
	Legumes 2x/wk		Legumes 4x/wk		Legumes 4x/wk	
	Ground meat (fat >10%) no more than 2x/wk		Ground meat (fat >10%) no more than 4x/wk		Ground meat (fat >10%) no more than 6x/wk	
Fruit/Vegetable	3 servings		6 servings		9 servings	
Vitamin A	1 rich serving 2-3x/wk		1 rich serving 4-6x/wk		1 rich serving 4-6x/wk	
Vitamin C	1 rich or 2 fair servings		2 rich or 4 fair servings		3 rich or 6 fair servings	
Grains/ Starches	2 servings		4 servings		6 servings	
	Whole Grains 2x/wk		Whole Grains 4x/wk		Whole Grains 6x/wk	
Milk	1 serving		2 servings		3 servings	
Energy	No less than 600 Average 685 for the week		No less than 1235 Average 1370 for the week		No less than 2000 Average ≤2054 for the week	
Follow Dietary Guidelines	Sodium (Not more than 800 mg)		Sodium (Not more than 1200 mg)		Sodium (Not more than 2000 mg)	
	Fat (15-26 g)		Fat (29-52 g)		Fat (44-78 g)	

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, each meal in the attached menus follows the meal pattern developed by the Illinois Department on Aging and/or provides one-third of the current Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Academy of Sciences and conforms to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Menu Approval Sheet
for use with Nutritional Analysis for
AgeOptions Title IIIC Nutrition Programs**

Nutrient	1 Meal per Day		2 Meals per Day		3 meals per Day	
	Minimum	Check	Minimum	Check	Minimum	Check
Energy (Kcal)	No less than 600 per meal; Average 685 per day for the week		No less than 1235 Average 1370 for the week		No less than 2000 Average ≤2054 for the week	
Protein	19 grams		38 grams		57 grams	
Fat	<26 grams ≤30% calories averaged over one week		<52 grams ≤30% calories averaged over one week		<78 grams ≤30% calories averaged over one week	
Fiber	10 grams average over one week		20 grams average over one week		30 grams average over one week	
Calcium	400 mg		800 mg		1200 mg	
Vitamin A	300 ug		600 ug		900 ug	
Vitamin C	30 mg		60 mg		90 mg	
Vitamin E	5 ug		10 ug		15 ug	
Vitamin B6	.6 mg		1.2 mg		1.7mg	
Folate	133 ug		267 ug		400 ug	
Vitamin B12	.8 ug		1.61 ug		2.4 ug	
Carbohydrate	43 grams		87 grams		130	
Sodium	Not more than 800 mg		Not more than 1200mg		Not more than 2000 mg	

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, each meal in the attached menus provides one-third of the current Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Academy of Sciences and conforms to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Signature: _____ Date: _____