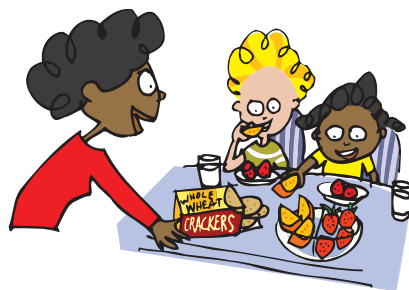


# Meat and Meat Alternates: Build a Healthy Plate With Protein

## Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program



**Children should eat a variety of meat and meat alternates each week.** These foods include fish, shellfish, dry beans and peas, nuts, and seeds, as well as lean meats, poultry, and eggs. Most children 2 years and older do not consume enough fish, shellfish, and dry beans and peas. You can help by offering different meat and meat alternates on your menu. Include a variety of meat and meat alternates at meals and snacks to:



- **Give children the protein, B vitamins, and minerals (like iron, zinc, and magnesium) they need to grow, play, and learn.**
- **Protect children's hearts, brains, and nervous systems with heart-healthy oils from fish and seafood.**
- **Help children feel full for longer with protein.**

### What types of meat and meat alternates should I offer?

Providing different choices each day helps children get the nutrition they need and introduces them to new foods.

- ▶ **Fish and seafood (fresh, frozen, or canned) are good choices for meal time.** Try salmon, tuna, trout, and tilapia prepared in different ways: baked, grilled, or in sandwiches or tacos.

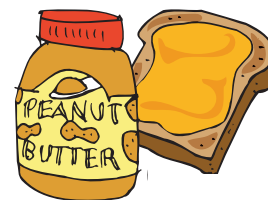
- ▶ **Poultry, like chicken or turkey,** can be served grilled, roasted, or in pastas or burritos.

- ▶ **Look for lean cuts of meat, including beef, pork, and lamb.** Try round steaks and roasts (round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts. The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, or center loin.

- ▶ **Choose the leanest ground meats possible** (including beef, pork, chicken, and turkey), preferably meats labeled "90% lean" or higher. The higher the % number, the lower the amount of solid fats in the meat.



- ▶ **Offer unsalted, chopped, or finely ground nuts and seeds (including almonds, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds),** and peanut and sunflower seed butters spread thinly.



- ▶ **Prepare and serve eggs in different ways.** Try hard-boiled egg slices, scrambled eggs, or deviled eggs (prepared with low-fat mayo or mustard). Make sure the egg whites and yolks are cooked thoroughly to avoid foodborne illness.

- ▶ **Cooked, canned, or frozen dry beans and peas are all great options.** Vary the choices for dry beans and peas.



*more 'types of meats and meat alternates' on next page ...*

... more 'types of meat and meat alternates'

- ▶ **Yogurt and cheese can be credited as a meat alternate.** Offer yogurt labeled fat-free or low-fat (1%). When selecting cheese, choose low-fat or reduced-fat versions. Cheese must *not* include the words “processed cheese product” on the label.



#### CACFP Crediting Tip:

Both yogurt and cheese must be “commercially prepared,” such as those you would find in your local grocery store. While yogurt and cheese are considered meat alternates, they *cannot* be substituted for the fluid milk meal pattern requirement.

- ▶ **Serve processed soy products, such as meatless “chicken” nuggets or soy burgers that are creditable.** To credit soy products as a meat alternate in CACFP, they must have a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or a company-certified product formulation statement. (Use only creditable products; check with your State agency or sponsoring organization for additional guidance.)

*Example of a CN Label for an entrée item made from Alternate Protein Products (APP) or soy, which credits as a meat alternate because it is a good source of protein.*

Item Made from APP Patty made with Soy Protein Concentrate

CN		000000
CN	Each 2.25 oz Patty made with Soy Protein Concentrate provides 2.00 oz equivalent meat alternate for the Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Requirements. (Use of this logo and statement authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA 05/04).	CN
CN		



- **Large chunks of meat and cheese, as well as string cheese, larger beans, nuts and seeds, and nut and seed butters pose choking hazards.**
- **See Supplement A on page 77 for more information on choking hazards.**



#### CACFP Crediting Tips:

- **Mature (dry) beans and peas may be considered both as a vegetable and meat alternate. However, they *cannot* be credited as both a vegetable and a meat alternate in the same meal.**
- **See the Vegetable as well as the Dry Beans and Peas tip sheets on pages 9 and 15 for more information.**



- **Some children in your care may be allergic to fish, shellfish, soy, milk, wheat, eggs, nuts, and seeds.**

**Actively supervise children when serving these foods. Handle food allergies on a case-by-case basis, have a medical statement on file, and contact your State agency or sponsoring organization if additional guidance is needed.**

- **See Supplement B on page 81 for more information on food allergies.**

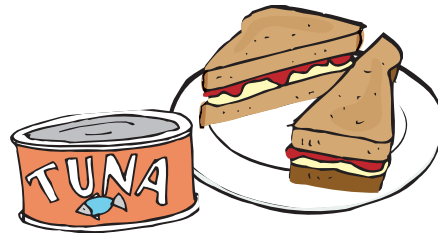
#### NOTE:

**Be mindful of serving dairy-based meat alternates like yogurt and cheese to children who are lactose-intolerant. Consider alternatives like beans or eggs instead.**

## How can I serve a variety of meat and meat alternates low in sodium and solid fats?

Be sure to start with lean choices for meat and meat alternates. Use recipes without adding too much sodium (salt) or solid fats like butter, stick margarine, cream sauces, gravy, and regular, full-fat cheese (see the Sodium as well as the Fats and Oils tip sheets on pages 37 and 41 for more information). Here's how:

- ▶ **Use herbs or no-salt spice mixes instead of salt, butter, or stick margarine to season dishes.** This will lower solid fats, sodium, and calories in the dishes while adding flavor.
- ▶ **Trim away visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking.** Remove the skin from chicken and turkey to reduce the amount of solid fats. Drain off any fat that appears during cooking.
- ▶ **Broil, grill, roast, poach, or boil fish, meat, or poultry instead of frying.** These cooking methods do not add extra fat and calories. Keep in mind that breading adds extra calories, and frying causes food to soak up more fat during cooking.
- ▶ **Limit serving highly processed poultry, fish, or meat (like hotdogs, chicken nuggets, and fish sticks) to once weekly.** Even “reduced-fat” meats and cold cuts, like sausage, bologna, and salami, may be high in solid fats, sodium, and calories. Use canned tuna or salmon (packed in water) for sandwiches in place of deli or lunch meats, which are often higher in sodium.



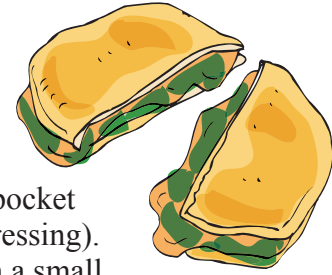
- ▶ **Purchase canned beans, fish, and meat labeled “no salt added” or “low sodium.”** If these are not available, reduce sodium by draining and rinsing canned foods before preparing. Choose fat-free refried beans or reduced-sugar and reduced-sodium versions of baked beans.
- ▶ **Pour the bag of dry beans or peas into a bowl of water on the kitchen counter.** Soak dry beans or peas overnight without adding any salt, and discard the soaking water and cook the next day.
- ▶ **See *Choose MyPlate* for additional ideas on lean choices for meat and meat alternates.** <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/protein-foods-tips.html>

## How can I help encourage kids to eat meat and meat alternates?

Here are some ways to get kids excited about meat and meat alternates:

### Be Creative When Offering Meals and Snacks

- ▶ **Make food fun.** Serve “Shark Pockets” (stuff half a whole-wheat pita pocket with canned light tuna, spinach, shredded carrots, and a little salad dressing). Try “Peanut Butter Roll-Ups” (spread a thin layer of peanut butter on a small whole-grain tortilla, top with grated carrots, and roll it).
- ▶ **Give the food items creative names.** Make a lean “Mighty Monster Meatloaf” by using whole-grain bread or cracker crumbs and lean ground meat. Try “Crunchy Cereal Chicken or Fish,” using rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole-grain cereal as breading for baked chicken or fish.



### Let Children Participate in Putting Together Meals and Snacks

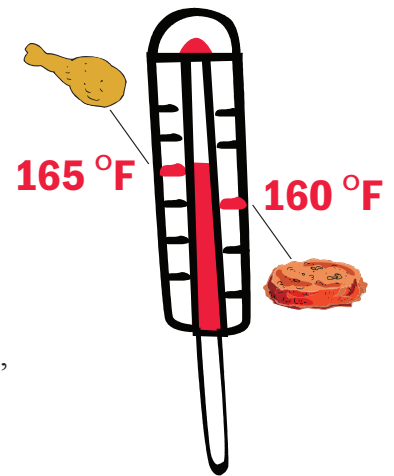


- ▶ **Put kids in charge.** Have children make a potato fixin's bar by choosing their own toppings for half a baked potato. Arrange separate bowls and serving utensils for refried beans, black-eyed peas, chopped chicken tenders, shredded low-fat cheese, sliced cherry tomatoes, thinly chopped spinach, and grated carrots for children to build their own baked potato.
- ▶ **Cook together.** Children learn about foods when they help prepare them. Children can mash beans, wash and dry the tops of canned foods, spread peanut butter on crackers, or mix ingredients together for a chicken salad. [http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles\\_Newsletter\\_31.pdf](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_31.pdf)
- ▶ **Send the message home.** Share the *Nibbles for Health* take-home newsletter for parents on easy weekend lunch ideas. Encourage them to let children help set the table or choose which ingredients to use. [http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles\\_Newsletter\\_20.pdf](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_20.pdf)

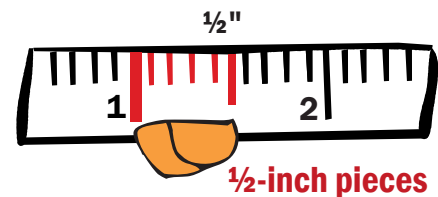
## How can I keep meat and meat alternates safe?\*

### Cook Foods to the Proper Internal Temperature

- ▶ **Do not rinse raw fish, seafood, meat, and poultry.** Bacteria in these raw juices can spread to other foods, utensils, sinks, and other kitchen surfaces. Cooking foods thoroughly will kill harmful bacteria.
- ▶ **Use a food thermometer to check temperatures to determine when a meat, fish, poultry, or egg dish is fully cooked.** Do not judge whether a food is cooked thoroughly by its color or texture. Cook ground beef, pork, veal, or lamb to 160 °F; egg dishes to 160 °F; and poultry, casseroles, or leftovers to 165 °F. See this chart for more detail on minimum internal temperatures and how long to hold different foods at that temperature. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>



- **For preschoolers, cut meat, fish, and poultry into small pieces no larger than one-half inch (½") to prevent choking.**
- **If serving hot dogs, sausages, cheese sticks, and other round foods, slice them in strips or half-moon shapes.**
- **Serve thoroughly cooked, mashed, or puréed beans and peas to children under 4 years old.**



### Keep Foods Out of the Temperature “Danger Zone”

- ▶ **Keep perishable foods out of the “danger zone” of 40 °F to 140 °F** by keeping food in the refrigerator before cooking or serving and returning leftovers to the refrigerator immediately.
- ▶ **Never thaw foods on the kitchen counter or at room temperature.** Defrost foods on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator overnight. Another option is to place food that is either packaged or contained within an air-tight bag or container under cold, running tap water until fully thawed. Only a thin stream of running water is needed. For a quick thaw, use the defrost option on a microwave oven, but only if you are going to cook the meat immediately after it is thawed.



**See the Food Safety tip sheet on page 55, Supplement A (Choking Hazards) on page 77, and Supplement B (Food Allergies) on page 81 for more information.**

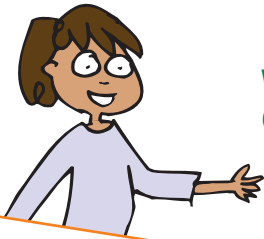
\*The food safety guidelines contained in this tip sheet are based on recommendations found on the Web site [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov). Providers should check with their State agency or sponsoring organization for the specific food safety requirements in the communities they serve.

## Activities

### How can I put this information into practice?

Take a look at your current weekly or cycle menu. Circle the menu items that feature meat and meat alternates on your child care menu.

Put a star (\*) next to your menu choices that are lean, or made or served without too much salt or solid fats. Refer to tips from this tip sheet to identify lean choices for meat and meat alternates. See the Sodium as well as the Fats and Oils tip sheets on pages 37 and 41 for more information on reading the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list on food packages.



**Which new lean meat and meat alternates listed below will you try on your menu?  
Go for variety each week! Circle what you plan to try next month.**

<b>Meats</b> <b>Lean cuts or ground (90% lean or higher):</b> Beef Ham Lamb Pork Veal  <b>Game Meats:*</b> Bison Rabbit Venison  <b>Lean luncheon or deli meats (labeled as 'Lean' or 'Extra Lean')</b>  <b>Poultry:</b> Chicken Duck Goose Turkey Ground chicken and turkey	<b>Eggs</b> Chicken eggs Duck eggs	<b>Dry Beans and Peas</b> Black beans Black-eyed peas Chickpeas (garbanzo beans) Kidney beans Lentils Navy beans Pinto beans Soy beans Split peas White beans	<b>Processed soy products of meat alternates with a CN Label or a company-certified product formulation statement:</b> Soy burgers Soy patties
	<b>Yogurt (with added vitamin D)</b> Fat-Free Low-Fat (made with 1% milk)		
	<b>Cheese (fat-free or low-fat, made with 1% milk)</b> <b>Hard natural cheeses:</b> Cheddar Mozzarella Parmesan Swiss  <b>Soft cheeses:</b> Cottage cheese Ricotta  <b>Processed cheeses:</b> American	<b>Nuts and Seeds</b> Almonds Cashews Hazelnuts (filberts) Mixed nuts Peanuts Peanut butter Pecans Pistachios Pumpkin seeds Sesame seeds Sunflower seeds Walnuts	

\* Wild game meat is not allowed or creditable in the CACFP.  
Only fresh or frozen game meat purchased from a USDA-inspected establishment can be served.

more 'activities' on next page ...



... more 'activities'

### Seafood

#### Finfish, such as:

Catfish  
Cod  
Flounder  
Haddock  
Halibut  
Herring  
Mackerel  
Pollock  
Salmon  
Sea bass  
Snapper  
Swordfish  
Trout  
Tuna

#### Shellfish, such as:

Clams  
Crab  
Crawfish  
Lobster  
Mussels  
Octopus  
Oysters  
Prawns  
Scallops  
Shrimp  
Squid (calamari)

#### Canned fish in water, such as:

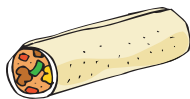
Anchovies  
Clams  
Salmon  
Sardines  
Tuna

How will you offer these meat and meat alternates next month? As part of a:

☐ Salad

☐ Sandwich

☐ Bean Burrito or Quesadilla



☐ Kangaroo Pocket (veggies and chicken or bean fillings in a whole-wheat pita pocket)

☐ Pizza

☐ Rice and Bean Dish

☐ Turkey Veggie Roll-Up (fillings wrapped in a whole-grain tortilla with veggies and ranch dressing)

☐ Soup, Chili, or Stew



☐ Hot Pasta or Lasagna Meal

☐ Egg Dish

☐ Bean or Pasta Salad

☐ Fish Taco

☐ Snack

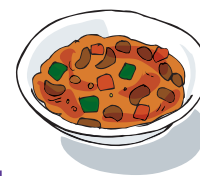
☐ Bean Dip (serve veggie sticks with mashed bean dip or puréed chickpeas)

☐ Stir-Fry

☐ Casserole

☐ Main Dish

☐ Meatless Meal  
(featuring beans or peas)



☐ One Pot Meal (with whole grains, veggies, and beans or meat in a slow cooker)



#### CACFP Crediting Tip:

Include the full portion of meat or meat alternate, depending on the meal and the age of the child.

Reminder: Make sure these menu choices are low in sodium (salt) and solid fats.



## My Notes: