The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a series of Questions and Answers in response to issues raised regarding the recent changes to the use of breast milk and the elimination of cow’s milk in the infant meal pattern (refer to CACFP CCC Handbook Revision 00-1). This Policy Alert also provides responses to questions asked regarding the use of commercial baby foods.

For purposes of the following Questions and Answers, the term “infant” refers to babies under 12 months of age. The term “child” or “children” refers to those 12 months of age and over.

Question 1. When an infant receives both breast milk and formula, is the meal eligible for reimbursement?

Yes, a meal served to an infant under 12 months of age which contains some amount of breast milk (and some amount of formula) is reimbursable as long as 1) the total number of ounces offered to the infant meets, or exceeds, the minimum amount for the milk component as specified in the CACFP infant meal pattern; and, 2) the facility provides the formula or at least one optional meal component listed in the meal pattern for the appropriate age group (See CACFP CCC Handbook, Section IV-4, for additional policy regarding this situation.)

Question 2. Are meals served to children 12 months of age and older reimbursable if they contain infant formula?

Yes, with the following caveat. When a child 12 months of age is weaning from infant formula to whole cow’s milk (or transitioning), meals that contain infant formula may be reimbursable for one month. During the weaning process from formula or breast milk to cow’s milk, it is a common practice to provide the infant with both foods at the same meal service to gradually ease the infant into accepting some of the new food.

However, for children 13 months of age and older, you must have a statement from a recognized medical authority requiring infant formula to continue to be served to a child in order for the meal to be eligible for claiming for reimbursement.

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Question 3. If a physician prescribes whole cow’s milk as a substitute for breast milk for an infant under 12 months of age, is the meal reimbursable?

Yes. A meal or snack containing whole fluid cow’s milk served to an infant under 12 months of age is eligible for reimbursement if the substitution is authorized in a written statement from a recognized medical authority. Similarly, if a recognized medical authority prescribes a formula such as low-iron fortified formula, which is not currently listed as a creditable formula for CACFP, the meal is eligible for reimbursement. The medical statement which explains the food substitution or modification must be kept on file by the facility or institution.

Question 4. A mother would like her 5-month old infant to receive breast milk which she provides and solid foods, which are listed as options in the meal pattern. Because the infant is developmentally ready for solid foods, whose responsibility is it to provide them?

If an infant is developmentally ready for one or more solid food items and the parent or guardian requests that the infant be served solid foods, the center is responsible for purchasing and serving them to the infant.

The CACFP infant meal pattern considers the difference in developmental rates for infants. Some food items such as fruit and cereal are listed as options in order to account an infant’s readiness to accept the new foods. A child care center must serve a complete meal to every infant or child enrolled for the meal service. Therefore, if a child is developmentally ready for these solid foods, and the parent or guardian requests that the infant is served solid foods, the components are no longer considered as options and should be served to the infant.

Question 5. Is a meal reimbursable if the parent or guardian provides the majority of the meal components for infants older than three months?

A parent may provide additional food items for meals for infants older than three months of age provided that the parent observes local health codes in the preparation and transporting of the food. However, in order for the meal to be eligible to claim for reimbursement, the center must provide at least one of the components in the minimum quantity specified in the meal pattern. Centers must ensure that the parent or guardian is indeed choosing to provide the preferred component(s) and that the center has not solicited them to do so in order to complete the meal and reduce cost to the center.

Question 6. If a mother comes to the center to nurse her infant, is the meal reimbursable?

No, if breast milk is the only required item for the meal. However, if the infant is over 3 months of age and the center provides at least one other component, the meal is considered reimbursable. (See CACFP CCC Handbook, Section IV-4, for additional information.)
Question 7. Cottage cheese is a meat alternate in the lunch and supper meal pattern for infants ages 8 through 11 months. How much cottage cheese must be offered to fulfill the meat/meat alternate meal pattern requirement?

The amount of cottage cheese required to be served to fulfill the meat/meat alternate requirement is 1 - 4 ounces.

Question 8. Beech-Nut has a product called a “dessert” which contains only apples, apple concentrate with water added, cinnamon, and Vitamin C. There is no added sugar. I know that we don’t allow “desserts” to be credited, in general; since this product does not contain pudding, cereal, or some other type of an extender, would this be an exception? It is possible that Beech-Nut has many other fruit “desserts” that would fall in the same category.

The Beech-Nut product labeled as a “dessert” is not reimbursable in the infant meal pattern of the CACFP. Commercial baby foods in the dessert category (these generally have “dessert” or “pudding” as part of the product name on the front of the label) which list a fruit as the first ingredient in their ingredient listing are not reimbursable meal components in the infant meal pattern. If a facility or parent wishes to feed an apple-containing baby food, there are numerous baby food manufacturers, including Beech-Nut, that produce baby food fruit products containing apple as a single ingredient or in combination with other fruits.

Question 9. Carnation has a new product which is infant cereal and formula mixed together. I consider this a “combination food” and thus not creditable. Have you received anything from Carnation to indicate how much cereal would be in a serving?

All infant cereals which contain formula ingredients added to them by the manufacturer are not reimbursable. The CACFP infant meal pattern will allow only infant cereal that meets the definition “any iron-fortified dry cereal specially formulated for and generally recognized as cereal for infants that is routinely mixed with breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula prior to consumption” and does not contain additional ingredients such as fruit or infant formula ingredients.

Question 10. In the “Feeding Infants” booklet, page 30, it describes good practices for preparing bottles, including boiling everything for 5 minutes. What was the source agency for this information? Is this something that is cited in each state’s sanitation regulations?

According to the product labels on most cans of infant formula, most manufacturers recommend boiling bottles and their parts for 5 minutes to ensure that the bottles and parts are sterilized and sanitary. The upcoming edition of “Feeding Infants - A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs” will include this same recommendation. The above recommendation is also included in the publication “Keeping Kids Safe: A Guide for Safe Food Handling & Sanitation for Child Care Providers” (November 1996) published by USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service, under “Safe Handling of Bottles,” page 6: “Wash bottles, bottle caps and nipples in the dishwasher OR hand wash, rinse and boil for 5 minutes or more just before re-filling.” The recommendation to boil bottles and their parts for 5 minutes may or may not be in each State’s sanitation regulations.
Question 11. We received a mysterious call about a Food Guide Pyramid for ages 2-6. Can you share any background information?

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) published the “Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children” this past Spring. Team Nutrition then printed and distributed copies of the poster to child care sponsors, State agencies, and the USDA Regional Offices. You can contact Team Nutrition to order. The booklets and sample menu flyers which were also developed by CNPP can be purchased from the National Food Service Management Institute. If you have further questions on this issue, please contact Vicky Urcuyo at (703) 305-1624.