

# Questions and Answers

## Calorie Range

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### **If we have a childhood obesity problem why doesn't the calorie standard recommend that schools serve calories below 100%?**

Serving a meal with less than 100% of the minimum calories would be less restrictive than the USDA Standard. A State agency cannot make standards that are less restrictive than the USDA Standards. The majority of students participating in School Meal Programs come from food insecure households, therefore meeting their minimum calorie requirements is important.

## Trans Fat

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### **What does "strive to eliminate" mean in the trans fat standard?**

Since trans fats do occur naturally in some foods it is difficult to completely eliminate trans fats from all meals. The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend keeping trans fat consumption as low as possible. Schools should follow this recommendation by reading Nutrition Facts labels and eliminating foods that are high in trans fats.

### **What are natural trans fats? Are these okay in school meals?**

A small amount of trans fat is found naturally in some animal-based foods such as beef, lamb, and dairy foods. It isn't clear if these naturally occurring trans fats have the same negative effects on the body as trans fats that have been industrially manufactured. According to the FDA, completely eliminating trans fat from the diet is not practical because they are unavoidable in ordinary diets. For this reason the trans fat standard does not apply to naturally occurring trans fats.

## Pre-Fried Foods

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### **Why are you allowing three pre-fried items per week? Shouldn't it be less?**

Due to the availability and cost of non-pre-fried items, CNP is allowing schools to serve three pre-fried foods

per week. (CNP felt that it would be very difficult for schools to meet this standard if it was more restrictive.) Schools should work to serve as few pre-fried items as possible and not to serve more than the maximum in the pre-fried standard.

### **If it fits in the analysis, does it matter if it is deep fried or fat is added?**

The standards specifically focus on fried and pre-fried foods because studies show that limiting the consumption of fried or pre-fried foods is one of the most effective ways to reduce the intake of fats. Schools frequently struggle to meet their calorie and nutrient requirements while staying below the minimum fat requirements, especially at the secondary level. Reducing the amount of pre-fried foods will help assure that nutritionally dense foods are served more often and high fat, fast foods are not the normal fare. Also, schools have the responsibility of modeling healthy eating by providing students with regular healthy choices. A school that is serving pre-fried fast food every day is not modeling healthy eating behaviors for students. It is not healthy for anyone of any age to eat pre-fried foods every day.

## Whole Grains

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### **Will the schools have to bake everything from scratch to meet the whole grain standard?**

No. Some schools choose to make their whole grain baked products from scratch, while some choose to purchase some of their whole grain products. The food industry has recently increased the availability of whole grain foods due to the whole grain recommendation in the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and customer demands. There are many whole grain products available to purchase including whole grain noodles, whole grain rice (brown rice), whole wheat bread sticks, whole wheat hoagie buns, and whole wheat pizza crust. Remember to always read the Nutrition Facts label ingredient list to determine if a product is a true whole grain. Some sales reps may think their product is a whole grain when in fact it may not be.