

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What tools do school food service programs need to implement NSMP?

Schools must have one of the USDA approved NSMP software programs as well as recipes for foods served. Nutrient information for specialty ingredients is required; the software programs contain a large database of ingredients and recipes, including those most widely used in school meal programs.

2. Does NSMP require new equipment?

Most school food service programs already have the required equipment for NSMP; these include a computer and a printer. The minimum specifications for running NUTRIKIDS® software are a 700MHz processor, 128 MB of memory with 50 MB availability, CD-ROM drive and a windows 98/2000/NT/XP operating system.

3. What expertise does school food service staff need to implement NSMP?

Personnel using the NSMP software should have basic computer skills, including proficiency in Windows-based software programs.

4. Is NSMP expensive?

NSMP software programs vary in cost based on the desired capabilities. Some are packaged with inventory systems; others are stand-alone NSMP programs. They are available for less than \$1,000.

5. How time consuming is NSMP?

The most time consuming component of NSMP is the data entry process. School food service staff who have organized the information in advance of entering the data, have found that the process moves quickly and smoothly. Once the initial menu has been entered, analyzed and modified, the planning of subsequent menus is an efficient process.

6. What new information does the school food service staff need to implement NSMP?

Schools must have recipes for foods served, nutrient information for ingredients not included in the database and information about the ages or grades of students in each school.

7. To qualify for reimbursement, what must a lunch include? What must a breakfast include?

Under NSMP, a reimbursable meal must contain a minimum of three menu items (see individual meal requirements). A reimbursable meal must meet the nutrient standard for the appropriate age or grade group when the nutrients in those foods are averaged over a school week.

8. What foods count for Nutrient Analysis?

All foods served in a meal, including condiments, are included in the nutrient analysis and count toward meeting the nutrient standards for the meal. (Condiments do not count as a required menu item.) Foods for a la carte or adult sales are not included in the nutrient analysis.

9. When using brand-name products, how will you get the information you need for nutrient analysis?

While one manufacturer's product may have the same name as another's, the ingredients can vary greatly. In many instances, this information is already in the USDA-approved software as part of the Child Nutrition Database (CN Database). Otherwise, you will need to obtain the nutrient analysis from the product's food label or by contacting the manufacturer, broker or distributor. Note: through a new NUTRIKIDS partnership, Kellogg offers downloadable product nutrient information at www.kelloggsfoodawayfromhome.com that is compatible with NUTRIKIDS (beginning June, 2007) software.

10. What is the Child Nutrition Database (CN Database)?

The USDA collects nutrient data on products commonly used in school breakfast or lunch programs and stores this data in the CN Database. The CN Database contains nutrient and product information on:

- Foods commonly used by schools
- USDA commodity foods
- USDA quantity recipes
- Brand-name foods used in schools

Menu planners use the CN Database with the USDA-approved software to create and implement menus. The database is updated annually.

11. If you serve both breakfast and lunch, can you do a combined nutrient analysis?

Yes. Some USDA-approved software is capable of calculating a combined nutrient analysis for breakfast and lunch.

12. How does Offer versus Serve work for lunch and breakfast?

Lunch – At least three menu items must be offered: an entrée, fluid milk and side dish. Students must select at least two of the three menu items. One of the two menu items selected must be an entrée. If more than three menu items are offered as a meal unit, students may decline no more than two menu items of the meal unit – students must always take the entrée)

Breakfast – At least three menu items must be offered, including sides and milk. Students may decline a maximum of one menu item out of the three or more menu items offered.

13. Where can I get the software to create my menus?

For a list of USDA-approved software and how to obtain it, contact your state agency or visit the Healthy School Meals Resource System website: www.healthymeals.nal.usda.gov

14. Why do I need the software?

The USDA-approved software performs all of the necessary functions for an accurate analysis. The software uses the CN Database to do the nutrient analysis. In addition you can add your own local database to the software for nutrient analysis.