

FRESH BITES NEWSLETTER

September 2021



Stronger with School Meals

We don't have to remind you that School Year 2021-2022 is in session. With it comes the uncertainty we've learned to expect. How's it going?

Supply chain issues and staffing challenges might be complicating your day-to-day, but let's take time to celebrate the small victories. Maybe you're welcoming students to the cafeteria for the first time in a year and a half? Or maybe you're getting creative and serving meals outside while the weather is still nice? The work you do isn't easy, but **remember you make a difference to the lives of those you serve and it doesn't go unnoticed!**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with weight gain among adults, but little was known about the pandemic's effect on the weight of children and teens. A new study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) indicates that childhood obesity rose significantly during the pandemic.

The research from Kaiser Permanente Southern California found the greatest change was among children ages 5 to 11, who gained an average of more than five pounds, adjusted for height. For the average 5-year-old, this equates to a 12.5 percent weight gain. For the average 11-year-old, it's a 6 percent weight gain. Prior to the pandemic, 36 percent of this age range were considered overweight or obese and that increased to over 45 percent.

What accounts for the weight gain? It's a culmination of several factors: changes in access to food, less regular physical activity, and an increased amount of sedentary screen time from remote learning.

When children are attending school in person, they have access to regular school meals and more opportunities for physical activity. Studies show that school meals are, on average, healthier than what children bring from home. That paired with consumer purchasing patterns during the pandemic indicating an increase in ready-to-eat foods high in calories, saturated fat, and added sugars and unrestricted access to food all day long, are likely the cause of the weight gain.

This research supports the significant role that school meals play in the battle against childhood obesity, during a pandemic or in "normal" times. For decades, school meals have been helping to prevent hunger and provide nutrients that kids need to learn and thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated hunger and highlighted how critical school meals programs are for ensuring families have access to healthy food.

Students typically consume up to 50 percent of their daily calories at school, so healthy cafeteria meal and snack standards that are in place are essential to support a healthy body weight. These healthier nutrition standards are linked with lower rates of obesity, particularly among children from low-income families.



Are you aware that we offer a free monthly newsletter for parents called Cafeteria Connection sent directly to your inbox? These one-page printable PDFs cover a wide variety of child nutrition topics and help promote your program to parents and caregivers.

Not already signed up? [Join the mailing list here.](#)

No monkeying around, National School Lunch Week is happening October 11-15! Are you ready to celebrate? Go bananas with the Wild About School Lunch theme and gear up with suggestions on how to celebrate from [School Nutrition Association!](#)



As foodservice professionals, you play an important role in supporting students as schools reopen to in person learning. To help you, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service put together a resource round-up. [Check it out here.](#)

Check this out!

Look how foodservice director Wayne Stephens from Brandon-Evansville used our Breakfast Menu Builder to create a breakfast cold bar. Way to go, Wayne!

Do you have an amazing serving line? Have a photo of a great lunch to share? Tag us on Facebook or Instagram and we'll repost!

@menufreedom


facebook.com/NutriStudentsK12



Printable Back to School Signage

It's so much more than a meal application.

Even though school meals are free this year, we encourage you to turn in your meal application today to take advantage of additional benefits for you and your family, while also helping our school.



School Funding
May provide additional funding for state and federal programs and services at our school.

Athletics
May result in free or discounted fees to participate in activities.

Internet Access
May qualify you for discounted rates on home internet service.

P-EBT
Determines eligibility to receive Pandemic EBT benefits.

Academic Tests
May qualify you for reduced registration fees for AP, SAT, and/or ACT tests. May also qualify you for discounted rates associated with college admissions.

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SCHOOL MEALS ARE FREE

All students will receive school meals at **NO CHARGE** for the 2021-2022 school year.

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Packing a lunch from home?



Pick 3, It's FREE!

This year, lunch is free for all students. If you pack a lunch from home, you can grab a fruit, vegetable, and milk at no charge. Just remember, students **must pick all 3** to count as a free lunch.

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In case you missed it in the last issue, we've created three free, 8 1/2" x 11" printable PDFs to help support your school nutrition program as you head back to the cafeteria. Just click the images above to download.

September Celebrations

As the school year kicks off, enjoy these fun September national months and observances:

Better Breakfast Month
Hispanic Heritage Month
National Honey Month
Whole Grains Month

National Mushroom Month
National Potato Month
National Blueberry Popsicle Month
National Cheeseburger Day (Sept. 18)

National Pepperoni Pizza Day (Sept. 20)
National Quesadilla Day (Sept. 25)
National Chocolate Milk Day (Sept. 27)
National Coffee Day (Sept. 29)

It's not too late to use

COVID-19

relief \$\$ to save!

Don't forget! If you have COVID relief funds available, consider investing in your program's future success by pre-paying for a NutriStudents K-12 subscription.

You will lock in our current risk-free pricing of \$289/month for years to come, plus you will also receive an additional 5% cash discount, a great annual cost savings. Email info@nutristudentsk-12.com for more info.

Let's stay in touch!

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Schedule a Demo

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