

obesity and obesity-related diseases. Dietary fat is a concentrated source of calories, with nine calories per gram, compared with four calories per gram for protein and carbohydrates. The easiest way to reduce calorie intake and remain at a healthy weight is to reduce fat intake.

Research has linked consumption of dietary fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol to high blood pressure, elevated blood lipids, and increased heart disease risk. In addition, being overweight and consuming excess dietary fat increases the risk for developing type 2 diabetes and hormone-related cancers such as breast and prostate cancer.

With nutrition research emphasizing the health risks of cholesterol and fats and the disease-preventive power of many nutrients found exclusively in plant-based foods, it is especially important that schools provide plant-based meals that are low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Most vegan entrées are naturally low in fat and cholesterol-free, and—when offered to children on a regular basis—will help them acquire healthy eating habits that will keep them slim and prevent a host of chronic diseases.

Obesity and Chronic Disease Prevention: 50 points

Subcategory	Data Source	Total Points	Formula
Did the district meet USDA National School Lunch Program nutrition requirements?	Menu Nutrition Analysis conducted by schools or PCRM	25 points	Average daily meal must be: Fat <30% of calories Saturated fat <10% of calories
How many vegan/vegetarian entrée options does the district offer?	Recent lunch menu (10-day period)	25 points	Featured vegan entrée daily=2 points per day for featured vegan entrées <i>or</i> Variety of vegan choices available on request=15 points <i>or</i> Vegetarian entrée daily=1 point per day for vegetarian entrée Bonus: Offering a variety of vegan options on a rotating basis (3 or more rotating options weekly)=5 points

Health Promotion and Nutrition Adequacy: 35 points

Separate from nutrition’s relationship to disease prevention is the issue of whether meal patterns meet nutrient needs and provide dietary options that promote the health of all children. The Health Promotion and Nutrition Adequacy category specifically measures whether the foods offered in elementary school lunches provide essential nutrients and fiber. To do this, the report grades school districts on the availability of daily low-fat vegetable side dishes, fresh vegetables, and fresh fruit. This category also includes points