



# Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements

## Aim

- This policy concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in care and the promotion of normal growth and development.
- The service is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in Munch & Move and the National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings as outlined in the Get Up & Grow resources.
- Further, we recognise the importance of supporting families in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating.

## Explanation

Research has shown that one in five preschoolers are either overweight or obese. By the time children in NSW reach kindergarten, almost 18 percent are either overweight or obese. The 2007 *National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey* found that the dietary patterns of many Australian children are less than optimal with high consumption of salt and saturated fat, and low consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Given that children are increasingly spending long periods of time in Centre-based care, early childhood educators can role model healthy eating and encourage young children to make healthier food choices. This will contribute to the prevention of weight problems in children, allowing children to thrive physically, socially and intellectually, and in turn contribute to prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases.

## Strategies

Staff and Educators will have access to the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings.

The Centre chef is qualified in an approved training course on food handling, nutrition and hygiene, and is provided with ongoing professional development opportunities to refresh knowledge of children's dietary needs, food handling and hygiene procedures.



### **Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods**

The service will:

- Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.
- Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk.
- Support mothers to continue breastfeeding until babies are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 months of age.
- Ensure the safe handling of breastmilk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.
- In consultation with families, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age.
- Always bottle feed by holding babies in a semi-upright position.
- In consultation with families, appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around 6 months of age.
- In consultation with families, offer a variety of foods to babies from all the food groups.
- Always supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle feeding and eating practices at all times.

### **Promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.**

The service will:

- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- Plan and display the service menu (at least two weeks at a time) that is based on sound menu planning principles and meets the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care.
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

### **Promote safety**

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets and consult with families to develop individual management plans.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Always supervise children while eating and drinking.



### **Safe food handling**

- Encourage and provide opportunities for cooking staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices
- Ensure gloves are worn or food tongs are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 5°C or above 60°C.
  
- Separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Food-handling staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the staff.

### **Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values**

- Ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided.
- Endeavour to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.
- Encourage older toddlers and pre-schoolers to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink - providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Children will be offered a variety of foods at each meal, they are encouraged to try different foods but are not forced them to eat.
- Do not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.
- The service will provide a healthy birthday cake for each child if their birthday falls on a day of attendance.

### **Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood staff and families about healthy food and drink choices**

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences encouraging children's healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.



**Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service**

- Families will be provided with opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the policy.
- Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the service and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children’s individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will:**

- Provide a menu consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Ensure that food and beverages provided are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and take each child’s individual dietary requirements, growth and development needs and any specific cultural, religious or health requirements into consideration
- Ensure that the service displays an accessible menu which accurately describes the food and beverages provided by the service each day
- The menu is diverse and will reflect the cultural backgrounds of families and the local community
- Ensure that educators and staff are aware of the need to implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service.
- Provide opportunities for staff and educator training in regards to nutrition and food safety.
- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011
- Allocate finances for training and food safety.
- Allocate finances to ensure provision of nutritionally balanced and culturally sensitive meals as required.
- Ensure that the service implements adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service.
- Ensure adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food are implemented at the service to minimise risks to children
- Ensure children being cared for by the service have access to safe drinking water at all times and are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day



**Educators and staff will:**

- Ensure healthy eating is promoted through role modeling and eating with the children
- Serve healthy food choices
- Provide water and milk as the only beverages served throughout the day.
- Food is presented in an encouraging manner to engage children to consume it.
- Provide safe food i.e. hygienically sound and with reduced risk of choking
- All mealtimes are positive, relaxed and social
- Children are encouraged to try new foods, and their food likes and dislikes are respected
- Children are positively involved in mealtimes
- Encourage independence and social skills at meal times
- Educators will engage children in learning experiences that are fun and enjoyable and incorporate key messages around healthy eating
- Implemented learning experiences will be guided by the EYLF principles and incorporate the child's identity
- Adhere to best practices around safe storage and heating of both expressed breast milk and formula.
- Adhere to the strategies and practices of the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Policy.
- Ensure children's individual dietary needs are adhered to.
- Provide positive meal time experiences for children.
- Respect the individual needs and choices of children.
- Actively supervise children during meal times.
- Adhere to the services Hygiene Policy.

**Breast milk storage and heating**

- Breast milk should be brought to our Centre
  - In sterilized plastic bottles or clip-lock bags in an insulated container.
  - Labeled with the name of the child, and the use by date.
- Breast milk should be stored on the lowest shelf of the fridge so as if it was to get knocked or spilled, the milk does not drip onto other food.
- Breast milk not used on the day should be returned to the family or discarded at the end of the day.
- Breast milk can be drunk straight from the fridge however if the child prefers it warm.
  - Heat the milk by standing the bottle in warm water. Discard leftovers – breast milk cannot be reheated.
  - Check the temperature prior to giving to the child.

**Infant formula**

Formulas should be used until 12 months of age. At that time our Centre will support the transition from formula to cow milk.

- Formulas should be supplied from the child's family.
- Sterilised bottles and teats are to be supplied fully labeled.
- Water for mixing formula shall be boiled water only.
- Formula should be prepared as close as possible to the time it is needed rather than in bulk.



- Parents are encouraged to supply the child’s bottles filled with the correct amount of boiled water. Please DON’T supply already prepared formula to avoid the small risk of harmful bacteria growing in the pre-prepared formula.
  - Formula should be stored in the fridge until used and discarded after 24 hours.
  - To heat formula evenly, warm the bottles in a water bath for no longer than 10 minutes
- The introduction of solids to babies and toddlers will be done in consultation with families and in line with recognised guidelines.
- Implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children; and

**With regards to infants; educators and staff will:**

- Encourage and support mothers with infants to continue to breast feeding as long as possible.
- If infants need extra fluids, boiled water up to 12 months will be supplied, from 12 months filtered water will be provided.
- Provide a supportive environment for breast feeding mothers to use while visiting the Service.
- Encourage introduction of solid foods at six months and not before 4 months.
- Provide gluten free cereal, pureed vegetables, and pureed fruits as first solids.
- Introduce iron containing foods such as meat, poultry, fish, legumes and whole grain cereals between 6 to 9 months.
- Provide a suitable range of food textures according to age and development of the infant.
- Introduce the use of a “sipper” cup rather than a bottle from 12 months of age.

**Partnerships with Families:**

- Staff and educators will support families’ choices regarding infant feeding, including breastfeeding and bottle feeding
- The Centre will provide families with up to date information on dietary requirements of young children to ensure optimal growth and development
- The Centre will provide families with daily information about their child’s intake of food and drinks throughout the day.
- Families are to communicate regularly with educators/ staff regarding children’s specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences.
- Families will contribute menu ideas and recipes.



## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years. Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

## Sources

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010  
Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011  
Guide to National Quality Standards 2011  
NSW Health [www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au)  
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing “Get Up and Grow”  
Childcare NSW Sample Policy  
Community Childcare Cooperative Sample Policy  
Munch and Move <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/>