

Nutrition, Food, Dietary Requirements and Food Handling Policy

Policy Number: 24

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Rationale and Policy Considerations

MCCC understands it has a duty of care to ensure that children's nutritional needs are met and food is prepared and stored safely. Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. All children have the right to develop to their full potential in an environment which provides for their health and wellbeing.

Children are especially prone to food borne illness because their immune systems are still developing and they cannot fight infection as well as adults can. The main causes of food borne illness are inadequate cooking; improper holding temperatures, contaminated equipment; unsafe food sources; and poor personal hygiene.

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires that approved provider/nominated supervisor/coordinators take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection.

Philosophy

Documented approach to provision of a healthy environment; approach to educator/staff professionalism and responsible conduct.

Legislation and Government Requirements

State/territory Health and Food Hygiene Legislation (Check your State or Territory legislation).

Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2012

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Purpose

To provide meals and snacks that are nutritious, appetising and that meet the Dietary Guidelines For Children and Adolescents.

Children's needs

Balanced diet; their food preferences to be respected; food allergies responded to; special diets followed; appetising, colourful food; opportunities to try new foods; regular mealtimes; children allowed to eat at their own pace; relaxed, pleasant eating experience

Families' needs

Their religious and cultural beliefs and practices and lifestyle choices in relation to food are respected; input into and feedback about what and when their child eats.

Educator/Staff needs

Appropriate resources and facilities to provide for each child's daily nutritional needs; training for food handlers.

Management needs

Be informed of any issues in relation to food provision that may impact on the management of the service.

Scope

This policy is for all employees, children and families of Merino Court Childcare Centre.

Policy Statement

Meal and snack times will provide positive learning experiences for children who will be encouraged to develop healthy eating habits. Parents/Guardians will be consulted and asked to share family and multicultural values and experiences to enrich the variety and enjoyment of food planned to meet each child's daily nutritional needs.

The service will strictly follow recommended safe food storage and preparation guidelines contained within the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia to ensure children's protection from food borne illness.

Policy Principles

Training and professional development

- A person employed to prepare meals will be qualified in an approved training course on food handling, hygiene and nutrition or will complete the course within three months of recruitment.
- Educators and food preparation staff will be provided with annual professional development to refresh their knowledge of food handling and hygiene practices. New staff to the service are required to complete training within two months of appointment.
- Educators, students and volunteers role model healthy eating behaviours and practices and follow the **Healthy Eating and Food Handling Policy. (change this if we rename this policy)**

Personal hygiene and health of food handlers

New staff will be inducted into the centre and be required to follow the principles and practices with regard to Personal Health and Hygiene. Existing staff will read the policy each year as a refresher to ensure standards are met. The most important things to know are:

- **Fingernails, jewellery and hair**
 - Keep fingernails short and clean; do not wear artificial fingernails;
 - Wear minimal jewellery (for example, plain wedding rings, sleepers) especially on hands and wrists. Do not wear loose jewellery, especially earrings;
 - Wear gloves over jewellery on hands if they are in direct contact with food; and
 - Tie back long hair and wear a hat.
- **Clothes**
 - Wear outer clothing that will not contaminate food or food contact surfaces and has a level of cleanliness appropriate for the handling of food that is undertaken; and
 - Wear a clean apron or similar and remove when going to the toilet, on a break or away from food handling duties.
 - Exposed cuts or sores
 - Cover cuts or sores with a bandage (for example, bandaid). If exposed (for example, on hands) cover with gloves or other waterproof covering to prevent seepage.
- **Eating**
 - Do not eat over unprotected food (that will be served to others) or food contact surfaces.
- **Hand washing**
 - Food handlers are expected to wash their hands whenever their hands are likely to contaminate food. This includes washing their hands:
 - immediately before working with ready-to-eat food or after handling raw food;
 - immediately after using the toilet;
 - before they start handling food or go back to handling food after other work;
 - after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or using tobacco or similar substances; and
 - after touching their hair, scalp or a body opening.
- **Correct hand washing procedure**
 - Use the hand washing facilities provided by the centre;
 - Clean their hands thoroughly using soap;
 - Use warm running water; and
 - Dry their hands thoroughly on a single use towel.
- **The health of food handlers**
 - It is very important that people who may be suffering from or carrying certain illnesses or suffering from some conditions do not handle food or food contact surfaces. This is particularly important if they are likely to contaminate food while they are working.
 - If a food handler has any of the following symptoms of food-borne disease: Diarrhoea, Vomiting, Sore throat with fever, Fever or Jaundice, the food handler will immediately inform the food safety

- supervisor; seek medical attention; and not return to work until they have been symptom-free for 48hrs.
- If a food handler has been diagnosed with any of the following food borne diseases: Hepatitis A; Norovirus; Typhoid fever; Shigellosis; or Staphylococcal or Streptococcal disease the food handler will cease all contact with food and food contact surfaces; and not return to food handling duties until medical clearance is provided.
 - If a food handler has an exposed wound or cut or infected skin sore, they will cover it with a bandage and highly visible waterproof covering.
 - If a food handler has any discharge from their ears, nose or eyes, they will take medication to stop any nasal or other discharge that may contaminate the food.
 - The supervisor will not disclose any of the above medical information to anyone with the exception of the proprietor of the business or a food enforcement officer, without the consent of the food handler. The company will not use this information for any purpose other than to protect food from contamination.

Provision of healthy nutritious snacks and meals

- Food will be prepared; stored and served hygienically. Educators follow the service's procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink. These procedures are contained in the Food Safety Plan.
- Food preparation facilities will be maintained in a hygienic condition in accordance with **Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policy**.
- The service will provide children with balanced snacks and meals consistent with the Australian Government Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings, and/or the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, that meet the recommended daily nutritional needs of children within each age grouping, are adequate in quantity, and take into account the child's growth and development needs.
- Snack and meal times will be treated as social occasions. Educators will sit with the children and interact with them to encourage healthy eating habits and an appreciation of a variety of foods. Older children will remain seated at the table until the majority have finished encouraging all children to complete their meal.
- School age children will be encouraged and supervised to assist in preparation, serving and cleaning up at snack time.
- School age children will be encouraged to make healthy choices that complement recognised dietary guidelines, and to adopt socially acceptable behaviours when sitting and eating food together.
- In following with dietary guidelines, children will not be permitted to eat lollies, soft drink etc. while at the centre. . Furthermore, children will be encouraged to drink water or milk in cups or bottles. Juice and cordial will not be served to children. Parents who supply these drinks in their child's bottle will be asked to provide another bottle for their child while at the centre. The juice bottle will be kept in the fridge for the child to drink on the way home. Water will be available for the children at all times.
- Staff will role model healthy eating. Any non-child food will be consumed in the staffroom on breaks.
- The menu will reflect a wide variety of cultures, especially the cultural backgrounds of the families and the local community. Recipes for all meals will be available to parents/guardians on request.
- The menu will be nutritious and varied and will accurately describe the food and beverages to be provided by the service each day.
- Menus will be planned with input from children, families, food preparation staff, educators, and other staff, and displayed in the food preparation area and in the foyer in a prominent position visible to families. **Families will be notified of any changes to the planned menu. (day book)**
- Snack and meal times will be set to a regular schedule but individual needs will be accommodated.
- The importance of good healthy food, and hygienic and safe food handling and storage practices will be discussed with children as part of their daily program.
- Mealtimes will be used to discuss cultural differences and similarities. These issues will also be addressed throughout the course of the program both in planned and spontaneous experiences.
- All children and educators/staff will wash their hands with soap and running water and dry well prior to preparing, serving or eating food.

- Children will be encouraged to help set up and pack away the eating area. The menu will provide opportunity for the children to serve themselves on appropriate days. All children will be encouraged to feed themselves and staff will be available to help if needed.
- The centre operates on a monthly menu, which is changed every six months. Families will be notified of upcoming menu change through the centre newsletter. Where appropriate, the lunch menu for school holidays will be assorted sandwiches. The cook or coordinator will assess whether the children are being provided with at least the minimum amount of nutrients at each menu change.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the staff are made aware of any allergies or food restrictions. In some cases, parents will be asked to provide special foods for allergy needs. Allergy and food restriction information will be requested from parents every 6 months to enable accurate updating.
- Information relevant to child and family health, nutrition, hygiene and dental care will be available to parents. Furthermore, new information will be passed on to parents through the centre's newsletter.
- Food will not be used as a reward, nor will children be denied food as a punishment.
- Parents will be invited to provide cakes or biscuits for their child's birthday. These food items will be nut free. Families are required to give permission as part of the enrolment procedure for their child/ren to consume cakes supplied by families.
- Children will always be supervised when eating.

Feeding babies

- The service will discuss choices regarding breast and bottle feeding with families, will support families who choose to breastfeed their child while they are at the service by providing a comfortable and private place for breastfeeding, and will also facilitate the safe storage and heating of breast milk for families who wish to leave expressed feeds at the service for their baby.
- Baby bottles will be heated by placing the bottle in warm water and always heat-tested to ensure the milk is warm but not hot before feeding an infant. Microwaves are not to be used for heating baby bottles.
- Babies are always fed individually by educators.
- Parents who provide ready-made milk bottles for their child are to sign the bottle receipt log and place the bottles in the designated fridge. They are also made aware that bottles will only be heated once then any remaining contents discarded. Bottles are returned to parent rinsed but not sterilised. Bottles that remain at the centre are washed with hot soapy water and then soaked in boiling water for ten minutes before being stored.
- Introducing food and/or solids to babies and toddlers will be done in consultation with families, and in line with recognised nutritional guidelines. New foods will not be fed until they have been tried twice at home.
- Careful consideration will be given to reducing the risk of choking when choosing foods for young children.

Consulting and communicating with families

- Children will be encouraged to try new food but will never be forced to eat. Their food likes and dislikes and the family's religious and cultural beliefs or family lifestyle i.e. vegetarianism will always be respected. The service will discuss with families which mealtime practices that can be accommodated within the service and those which cannot due to health or hygiene concerns.
- Where children are on special diets the parents/guardians will be asked to provide a list of suitable foods and their child's food preferences. A **Special Diet Record** will be completed by the parent/guardian detailing which foods the child must avoid. Medical confirmation of a child's allergies will be required. Refer also to the service's Anaphylaxis Policy, and Medications and Medical Conditions Policy.
- Parents/guardians of infants and toddlers will be advised of their child's food intake each day.
- Parents/guardians of older children will be advised as appropriate.
- Information on nutrition, age appropriate diet, food handling and storage will be displayed at the service and provided to parents/guardians.

Dietary guidelines for children and adolescents

- Encourage and support breast-feeding.
- Children need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally.
 - Growth should be checked regularly for young children.
 - Physical activity is important for all children and adolescents.
- Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods.
- Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high energy needs, but reduced fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents
- Choose water as a drink.
- Alcohol is not recommended for children
- Care should be taken to:
 - Limit saturated fats and moderate total fat intake.
 - Low fat diets are not suitable for infants.
 - Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.
 - Choose low-salt foods.
 - Care for your child's food: prepare and store it safely

Dental Health

- The service liaises with families to establish dental health practices that are workable at home and at the service.
- The service systematically incorporates information on dental health practices into the children's program, including tooth brushing, 'tooth friendly' snacks, and going to the dentist.
- Children will be encouraged to rinse their mouths with water to remove food debris after every meal or snack. A small cube of cheese and a slice of apple are given to the children after meals to clean teeth.
- Children will be served nutritious meals, which limit the sugar intake and avoids items such as lollies, chocolates, sweet drinks etc.
- Children will be given milk or water while at the center. **Bottles with juice will not be given to children as it increases the risk of cavities.**
- Children with bottles for rest time will be given these before rest times at the table or when they wake. Bottles will not remain where they can be sucked over an extended period. Where possible, children will be given water in their bottles to help prevent decay. All children in the centre will be offered milk at morning tea. This means that they do not necessarily need a bottle after lunch. Too much milk can affect children's appetites and limit their food intake ([Connections Newsletter, Issue 7, Sept 02 - Australian Dairy Corporation](#)). This can affect the variety of nutrients that their body requires to grow and develop.
- Tooth brushing is the only effective means of removing bacterial plaque from the teeth and gums.
- Information on effective tooth brushing techniques will be provided to families.
- When teeth cleaning are included in the program, each child's Individual toothbrush will be rinsed after each use and stored in clean individual, enclosed containers.
- Staff role model good dental health practices.
- Information on dental care principles and practices will be displayed in the reception area and drawn to the attention of all families on a regular basis.
- The service will provide information to families on dental health principles relating to different age groups of children, as recommended by recognised health and dental health authorities. Wherever possible this information will be provided in families home languages.
- The service will be aware of dental first aid. Arrangements are made for dental health professionals to visit the service to talk with educators, children and families about dental health.

Related Documents

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010(Vic) - Section 3(2)(a); 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: 77- 80; 90-92;
- National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (Nov 2010) - Element 2.2.1; Element 3.1.1; Element 3.1.2; Element 4.2.1; Element 6.1.2; Element 6.2.1

- Early Years Learning Framework for Australia - Practice: Responsiveness to children; Intentional teaching; Cultural competence - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3
- Framework for School Age Care in Australia - Practice: Collaboration with children; Intentionality; Cultural competence - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3
- Food Safety Plan
- Monthly Newsletters
- Bottle Receipt Log
- Hand washing procedure
- **Special Diet Record**

Links to other policies

The following policies may be linked to this policy:

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Health, Hygiene and Infection Control
- Maintenance of a Safe Environment
- Medication and Medical Conditions
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Anaphylaxis
- Partnerships and Communication with Families
- Supervision

Further sources

Australian Government Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/healthy-eating-guidelines>

Children Youth and Women's Health Service - Parenting and Child Health - Food Safety - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=303&id=1618>

Children Youth and Women's Health Service - Parenting and Child Health - Teeth - Dental care for children - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=301&id=2519>

Diabetes Australia website - information about living with diabetes - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/>

Food Standards Australia New Zealand - food standards, consumer information, fact sheets - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/> **Fresh for Kids website - information on nutrition and recipes** - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.freshforkids.com.au/index2.html>

Healthy Kids Association - information on nutrition and healthy eating - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.healthy-kids.com.au/>

Healthy Kids website - Provides information resources and ideas on physical activity and healthy eating for children and young people - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/>

Heart Foundation - Eat Smart Play Smart - order manual, download information sheets and recipes - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from

http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Healthy_Living/Healthy_Kids/Eat_Smart_Play_Smart/Pages/default.aspx

National Health and Medical Research Council - Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/n34.pdf

National Health and Medical Research Council - Staying Healthy in Child Care - 4th Edition 2005 - Food Safety

- Retrieved April 11, 2011, from http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/ch43.pdf

Nutrition Australia - resources and fact sheets - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resources>

Sids and Kids - Information statement - Breast feeding - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from

http://www.sidsandkids.org/wp-content/uploads/Information-Statement-BF-2009_Cit-sug.pdf

The Australian Healthy Eating Guide - Retrieved April 11, 2011, from [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/E384CFA588B74377CA256F190004059B/\\$File/fd-cons.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/E384CFA588B74377CA256F190004059B/$File/fd-cons.pdf)
www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resource/dietary-guidelines-children-and-adolescents

Document History

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