

Nutrition, food, drink, and dietary requirements policy

Purpose

Under the [Education and Care Services National Regulations \(2011 SI 653\) - NSW Legislation](#), all early childhood education and care services must have policies and procedures in place in relation to nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements.

As part of our commitment to children's health, safety and wellbeing, we role-model food safety and hygiene practices, as well as supporting healthy food and drink choices according to each child's needs. (Reference: [ACECQA Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary guidelines policy guidelines](#))

Topics to consider:

- Nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements are met to promote growth, sustained energy and learning
- creation of a positive nutrition, food and drink environment in partnership with community and families
- children are guided to develop autonomy and independence in relation to their personal wellbeing
- cultural, religious and community considerations
- environmentally responsible practices
- impacts of development, health and medical conditions on children's nutrition and dietary requirements.

Policy principles

The principles we apply to our decisions and practices about nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements include:

- We prioritise children's health, safety and wellbeing. This includes safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food as well as providing a safe and positive environment for consuming food and drink brought from home.
- We promote a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and physical activity appropriate for each child.
- We value and respect each family's culture, customs and religious traditions, and support children's dietary requirements, food and drink restrictions and food preferences.
- We support children to develop a strong sense of wellbeing and self-determination in how they view and consume food and drink as a core step of learning to self-manage their personal wellbeing.
- We support children and families understanding and access to food and drink appropriate for age and in sufficient quantities and quality to sustain energy through the preschool day.
- We aim to deepen children's understanding of the relationship between food and our environment.

Nutrition, food and drink practices and strategies

Promote a positive eating and food learning environment

We will:

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- Role model and promote positive eating practices, including foods consistent with the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) at mealtimes.
- Support individual children's health, development and growth, including taking into consideration the impacts of medical conditions and disability on children's nutrition, food, drink and dietary needs.
- Support children and families' specific cultural, spiritual and religious values and requirements. Partner with families and community to create a positive eating and food learning environment. For example, invite family and community members to share garden produce, bush tucker fruit or surplus foods to provide children with seasonal snack table and / or ingredients to prepare and share.
- Ensure children have access to drinking water at all times. For example, by having drink bottles available all day; having a drink fountain; routine reminder at breaks and mealtimes to drink water; offering drinks appropriate to the needs of each child on a regular basis.
- Support sufficient food availability to meet children's dietary requirements. For example, by having extra supplies to supplement lunchboxes on a needs basis and negotiation with families for emerging feeding issues.
- Provide opportunities for children to experience a range of food and to learn about healthy food choices from educators and other children, such as through tasting, touching, smelling, cooking, healthy lifestyle play-based learning and cultural experiences.
- Use mealtimes and routines to engage in conversations with children about their food, and to help them to recognise when they are hungry or full.
- Incorporate children's choices and decision making into educational programming and at mealtimes, including learning to prepare and eat food safely, food choice and amounts, balancing appetite needs.
- Not use food to reward or to address behaviours of concern.
- Create a relaxed eating environment where children have sufficient time to enjoy their food and social interaction with others.
- Use fundraising opportunities to promote children's health and wellbeing.

Communicate positive and culturally responsive food practices with families

We will:

- Consult with families about individual children's developmental needs, dietary requirements and dietary restrictions (including, health and medical needs, food and drink allergies, food and drink intolerances and developmental, cultural and religious food restrictions). This information will be included in the children's enrolment records.
- Support the development of inclusive health support planning to meet children's nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements and eating environment through implementing the department's [Health support planning for children and students in education and care settings](#)
- Inform families of the preschools' risk minimisation strategies to support children with anaphylaxis, food and drink allergies, food and drink intolerances and restrictions. For example, at times the service may ask that some food or drink products are not brought in to the preschool (refer to the department's [Supporting children and students with anaphylaxis and severe allergies](#)); information will be provided to families about ingredients used during cooking experiences.
- Inform and support families to understand that children's voice and agency is a part of the educational program, including mealtimes and other food and drink related experiences. For example, engaging children in decisions about meals and routines, discussing and resolving day to day enactment of the nutrition policy, offering choices of food and drink related experiences.

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- Consult with families about their cultural, spiritual and religious values and requirements to support individual children's needs and all children's cultural understandings.

Provide information to families on the types of food and drinks recommended for children's lunchboxes. For example using the department [Packing the lunch box](#) resource or alternative resources and links to resources.

- Communicate to families that healthy and safe eating and drinking practices at established mealtimes is a goal the preschool is working towards. This may be communicated regularly or discussed individually as appropriate.
- Communicate relevant, informative and evidence-based nutrition, food and drink information to families in your newsletters, discussions, during orientation or by hosting information sessions.
- Consult with Aboriginal families, education and support workers and invite local community Elders/members to support individual children's cultural needs and all children's cultural understandings.
- Consult with culturally and linguistically diverse families and provide access to interpreting or translator services as required.

Provide hygienic and safe food practices

We will:

- Ensure children and staff implement safe hygiene and hand washing practices and safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and eating food. For example through supplying hand washing stations, hand sanitiser and hand hygiene posters; having sufficient and adequate equipment when food handling; having a cleaning roster; [food handling training](#) on a needs basis, and cleaning processes for eating and cooking areas.
- Actively supervise children at all times when they are eating and drinking, ensure they are seated and provide adequate time to eat and drink, to minimise risk of choking. Choking hazards (food types and sizes) will be considered when preparing, cooking or sharing foods with children, appropriate to age and ability.
- Ensure all staff comply with the department's [Anaphylaxis and allergies procedure](#) including promoting an allergy-aware environment and developing and implementing risk minimisation strategies.
- Ensure food is stored within food safe limits. For example through using insulated lunch boxes and ice-bricks, refrigeration, or storing lunchboxes inside a temperature-controlled environment.
- Support staff children's and visitor's awareness of hand hygiene.
- Role model and engage children in conversations about hygienic and safe food practices. This will include encouraging children to use their own utensils, encouraging sitting and discouraging children from sharing or handling other children's food and utensils.
- Outline any specific risk minimisation strategies your preschool implements.

Create an inclusive and family-friendly environment

We will:

Provide a supportive environment for families to feed their babies and young children, including comfortable seating and facilities to heat bottles.

Promote environmentally responsible practices

We will:

- Promote environmentally responsible and sustainable food and drink practices for food and drink bought to our preschool. For example through composting, recycling; reducing and discouraging packaging, single use plastic waste, re-usable food storage containers and bringing own water bottle.
- Encourage engagement and opportunities to extend children's understanding about nature and the environment and how food is grown, hunted, gathered, processed and prepared. This includes tending the garden.

Roles and responsibilities

Preschool director or principal

Lead the development and implementation of this policy in consultation with families and educators and ensure it reflects your preschool community and that it is accessible and communicated to all families and educators.

Ensure compliance with the department's related policies and procedures including:

- [Supporting children and students with anaphylaxis and severe allergies](#)
- [First aid procedure](#)
- [Health support planning for children and students in education and care settings](#)

Respond to instances of variations in practices to this policy on a case-by-case, ensuring each child's developmental and cultural needs are supported and families' decisions and food choices are respected.

Support educators to access professional development opportunities to broaden their understanding of children's nutrition, eating behaviours and creating positive and safe eating environments and learning.

Educators

Role model food safety practices, healthy eating and drinking practices and support families understanding of the preschool's approach to nutrition and healthy eating.

Work with other educators, families, and health professionals to implement action plans to support children with specific dietary, eating and drinking requirements, including children with developmental, health and medical conditions.

Raise any issues or concerns regarding implementation of this policy with the preschool director or principal.

Educators will put children's lunch boxes and food items in the preschool fridge when the temperature is 30 degrees celsius or higher.

Families

Provide information to the preschool director or principal about their child's dietary requirements and health support needs, together with the appropriate and current documentation, equipment and medication.

Support implementation of the preschool's policy.

Seek information and support from our educators about the preschool's nutrition and food practices and raise any concerns with educators or the preschool director or principal.

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Families are made aware to include ice packs into children's lunch boxes.

Governing council

Endorse this policy.

Supporting information

Provide links to other related policies and information. You can use links from the [Nutrition and dietary requirements in preschool](#) EDi page

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