



## Nutrition, Menu Planning and Dental Care

### Children's Services Policy No 2.15

**Date issued:** April 2015

**Replaces issue/policy:** Nutrition Policy, 2003 and Nutrition and Menu Planning, 2007

**Date effective:** April 2015

**Date revised:** May 2019, October 2020; and January 2023

#### Aim:

- To ensure children are provided with food and beverages that are nutritionally sound, varied and adequate in quantity, which comply with the Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents.
- To ensure that the service menus are age appropriate, taking into consideration the Recommended Dietary Intake and the individual requirements for children with food allergies or food intolerances.
- To cater for any specific cultural, religious or health requirements of children being cared for in the service.
- To promote, encourage and reinforce children's oral health and safety through a supportive environment for all children and families.
- To provide a learning environment that educates, establishes and supports dental health to develop life skills and practices for the children and families.
- To establish dental health network through working with local dentists and professionals

#### Background Information:

Eating a variety of nutritious food is important throughout childhood. This is the time when growth and maturation occurs and when eating habits are established. Nutritious foods refer to foods that make a substantial contribution in the provision of nutrients.

Developing healthy eating patterns early in life lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future. Involving children in menu planning, food selection and preparation will contribute to the development of healthy choices. In regards to dental health there are still substantial numbers of children under 6 years of age who have dental caries.

#### Relevant Legislation:

- [Education and Care National Regulations Amendment Regulations 2020](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Food Regulation 2015](#)
- [Food Standards Australia New Zealand \(FCANZ\) – Food Safety Standards \(Australia only\)](#)
- [Children \(Education and Care Services National Law Application\) Act 2010](#)
- [NSW Food Authority – Food Act 2003](#)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Children's Services Policy 2.16 - Food Safety**.

#### Resources:

- [Northern Sydney Local Health District – Health Promotion](#)
- [NSW Government Health Department, Oral health information](#)
- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#)

- [Australian Government, Department of health - Get up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#)
- [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard](#)
  - **Quality Area 2:**
    - Standard 2.2 - Element 2.2.1.

**Note:** In this policy “staff” and “educators” refers to staff employed within Children’s Services by Willoughby City Council.

### **Application:**

This policy applies to:

1. Education and care services, where meals are for the children enrolled in the service.
2. Out of School Hours Services where basic meals may be provided.
3. Vacation Care Services where food may be brought from home.
4. Services providing care for babies.

### **NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SERVICES/EDUCATOR’S WHO PROVIDE MAIN MEALS**

Children will be provided with a range of foods that are consistent with the Dietary Guide.

***Where children are provided with care for 8 hours or more in one day the service will provide a balanced menu*** that will supply the child with at least 50% of the recommended daily intake of nutrients.

**\*\* Menu planning does not apply to OOSH services that provide afternoon tea only. It is recommended that these services provide fruit and vegetables for afternoon tea with a snack/light meal.**

### **Menu Planning:**

- The menu of a service will reflect the age, stage of development, cultural background and likes of the children in that service.
- The menu will be developed using a range of recipes to ensure that the children are provided with a variety of meals. These menus are available to parents/carers. A list of ingredients used and recipes may be available upon request. (Long Day Care only).
- Menus will be written every two weeks and placed on display for parents/carers.
- Menus will be developed for a two-week period, to ensure that they offer a balance of meals throughout those two weeks.
- The menu will provide as much detail as possible on the type of food provided.
- Each menu will provide information on any alternative meals served to children who are on a restricted diet.
- Where the service provides care for babies the menu will provide specific information for the meals prepared for this age group.
- If the meal was changed for any particular reason, such as shortage of bananas, then the menu will be altered as such.

### **Long Day Care:**

Over a two-week period, the menu will provide each child with the following:

- 1 serve of milk, cheese and/or yoghurt per day. (Dairy foods are tooth friendly foods and can actually help protect teeth against damage from acid produced by plaque).
- 1 – 2 serves of fruit per day (as a minimum).
- 2 serves of vegetables per day:
  - A minimum of 2 vegetables with lunch.
  - As a snack.
- Up to 2 complete vegetarian meals per fortnight.

- 2 serves of cereals per day.
- 6 serves of lean red meat per fortnight.
- Up to 2 serves of white meat per fortnight.
- Children will be offered water with meals.

#### **General Practices:**

- Staff involved in food preparation will have completed an approved course in Safe Food Handling.
- Staff and children will follow hand-washing guidelines when preparing food (refer to **Children's Service Policy 2.8 - Hand Washing**).
- Cooks employed in Long Day Care Centres will have, as a minimum, completed an approved course in Safe Food Handling, Nutrition and Menu Planning.
- All meals will be low in salt and saturated fats.
- The service will provide high fibre breads, such as multigrain and whole meal.
- Fruit will be served at morning and afternoon teatime. A least two - three different fruits will be offered at these times to provide children will choice.
- Where vegetables are served as an accompaniment to a meal, children will be offered at least two to three different vegetables to provide children with a choice.
- Where vegetables are included in the meal, such as a stir-fry, the meal will include at least two to three different vegetables.
- Where a child is a vegetarian a specific menu will be available to ensure that the child is receiving the recommended intake of protein and iron from other sources.
- Children will be regularly offered food and beverages.
- Children will have access to safe drinking water at all times.
- Tap water will be provided to children.
- Drinks high in sugar, such as juice or Ribena, will not be provided by the service.
- Staff will offer water frequently to children during warm weather.
- Full cream milk will be provided for children 1 to 2 years of age.
- Reduced fat milk (containing 1.0-2.5% fat, not skim milk) will be provided for children over 2 years of age, as recommended by the Dietary Guidelines.
- Yoghurt, cheese, dairy desserts and calcium fortified soy products will be provided to children as part of a balanced menu at the Nominated Supervisor's discretion. Reduced fat varieties of foods may be served to children over two years of age.
- Where a child has an intolerance or allergy to dairy products the service will provide alternatives such as soy products. Parents/carers are required to discuss these alternatives with the Centre staff.
- Where a child has an allergy or intolerance to wheat or gluten the service will provide alternatives such as gluten or wheat free bread. Parents/carers are required to discuss these alternatives with the Centre staff.
- Parents/carers will be informed when their child is not eating well. Children will be encouraged to eat their meals; however, they will not be forced to eat. Where a child is generally a poor eater an alternative meal may be arranged.
- Meal times will be pleasant occasions and food will not be used as a reward or punishment, either in its provision or denial.
- The service menu will be on display. Parents/carers are invited to add comments, or suggestions to the menu.
- The service will provide a range of meals that reflect the cultural diversity of Australia.
- Children will have opportunities, as part of the service program, to assist in food preparation with age appropriate experiences. These experiences will focus on hygiene, safe cooking practises and healthy food choices.
- Children attending the Outside of School Hours services will be provided with a balance of nutritious foods from each food group for snacks as required. These snacks are not substitutions for main meals and are not designed to provide a child with the

required daily intake of nutrients.

- The service will provide parents/carers with information on the Dietary Guidelines and Recommended Dietary Intake as part of continuing information exchange.
- Children will be encouraged to rinse their mouth with water or eat a piece of apple or cheese after meals to assist in removing food debris from the mouth and cleansing the teeth.
- Our educators will encourage the children to sit down while drinking or eating.
- Where time permits, educators will sit and eat and drink with children to role model good eating etiquette and to make meal times a pleasant social occasion for children.
- Our educators will discourage any thumb or finger sucking.
- Our educators will actively discuss and incorporate information on oral health and nutrition into our learning curriculum.
- The Centre will provide access to fresh drinking water throughout the day and during lunch meals.
- The Centre will encourage healthy eating habits.
- Arrangements may be made for dental health care professionals to visit the Centre to talk with staff, children and families about dental health and oral care. (Long Day Care)
- The Centre will actively seek and provide information to families on dental health practices relating to the different age groups of children care is provided for as recommended by health and dental health authorities. Where ever possible information will be provided in the families' home language.

#### **For services with babies:**

The Centre will practice healthy bottle and dummy habits for the prevention of dental caries.

The Centre **will not**:

- Put children to bed with a bottle.
- Put any food or other substances on a child's dummy.
- Allow children to walk around with their bottle.
- Provide the child with anything other than water, formula, milk or breast milk.

The Centre **will**:

- Encourage parents/carers to wean children from dummies and bottles from 12 months on. Children will be encouraged to drink out of cups and weaned from bottles in consultation with parents/carers.
- Ensure that bottle-feeding has ceased before the child goes to sleep to avoid early infant tooth decay. If the child is to have a bottle before they go to bed, an educator will sit with or hold the child. The educator will remove the bottle before putting the child down to sleep.

#### **NUT FREE ZONES**

Due to the increasing number of children with allergies to nuts all Council education and care services promote a nut free environment. Therefore, products containing nuts such as peanut butter, or products thought to contain nuts will not be available at the services.

Where parents/carers bring their child's meals from home, such as in Vacation Care, peanut butter or other nut related products are not permitted.

Services, from time to time, may place additional restrictions on the foods available at the service. This is to ensure that all children are able to attend a service and be free from risk of an allergic reaction.

Children under five years of age have the highest incidents of allergic reactions to food. For this reason, the Long Day Care Services choose to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction

by restricting the food on the premises. Whilst nuts have a high prevalence of allergic reactions, many children suffer from other allergies such as eggs. Parents/carers who access the Long Day Care Services are **not** to bring any food into the centres, with the exception of baby bottles or if arranged with the Nominated Supervisor due to special circumstances.

**Please ensure that you have not left any food, including biscuits or cereal, in your child's bag.**

Where you wish to celebrate your child's birthday please talk with the cook or Nominated Supervisor of the service, as they will be happy to make internal arrangements to help in the celebration.

Parents/carers may wish to refer to the Medical Conditions Policy (2.3) for further information on allergies and anaphylaxis.

### **FOR SERVICES WHERE FOOD IS BROUGHT FROM HOME**

Vacation Care Services and on occasion in Long Day Care, food is supplied by the parents/carers. This may be due to the fact a child may be on a restricted diet, require specially prepared food, or that the service does not provide meals to children.

In these situations, the service/educator must ensure that food brought from home is safe, appropriate, in line with the Dietary Guidelines and stored correctly.

When food is brought from home:

- The service/educator will provide information to parents/carers that will assist the family in providing healthy meals that:
  - Meet Dietary Guidelines.
  - Are age appropriate.
  - Are of a variety and quantity that will satisfy the child's appetite and interest.
  - Are transported to the service within the safe temperature range (below 5°C or over 60°C).
- Parents/carers are required to provide nutritionally sound snacks. High sugar snacks and treats, such as chips and lollies should not be provided.
- Parents/carers are to ensure that they provide adequate food to meet their child's needs for the entire day. The service or educator will have additional healthy food available for the children in case a situation arises where a child's meal is insufficient in quantity. Parents/carers are to be aware that this range of food will be limited.
- Parents/carers may be asked to omit foods from their child's meals. This may occur if another child in the service suffers from an allergy, or if the service feels that a particular food being provided is not nutritionally sound, bearing in mind the child's age.
- The service/educator will provide educational activities and information to parents/carers and children on healthy eating.
- Educators are encouraged to sit with the children whilst they eat to promote socialisation and to assist in creating a pleasant environment.
- Educators will talk to the children about healthy food choices.
- Educators will provide feedback to parents/carers if their child is not eating the food being provided.
- Children will have opportunities, as part of the service program, to assist in food preparation with age appropriate experiences. These experiences will focus on hygiene, safe cooking practises and healthy food choices.
- Foods that require refrigeration will be stored in the fridge at the service.
- Bottles of breast milk or cow's milk, as provided by the parents/carers, will be stored in the fridge.
- Bottles will be warmed with a bottle warmer or placed in warm water to heat. Educators are not to use a microwave oven when heating baby's bottles.

- Bottles will be heated once. Any unused milk will be discarded and bottles will be rinsed out.

## **FOR SERVICES PROVIDING CARE FOR BABIES**

### **Storage and heating of breast milk or formula:**

- Parents/carers are required to provide breast milk or formula (prepared) in bottles that are labelled with the child's name.
- The bottles are to be stored in the refrigerator until required.
- Bottles will be heated to the required temperature using a bottle warmer. Bottles are never to be heated in a microwave oven.
- Bottles will only be heated once. Any unused milk will be discarded and bottles rinsed out.

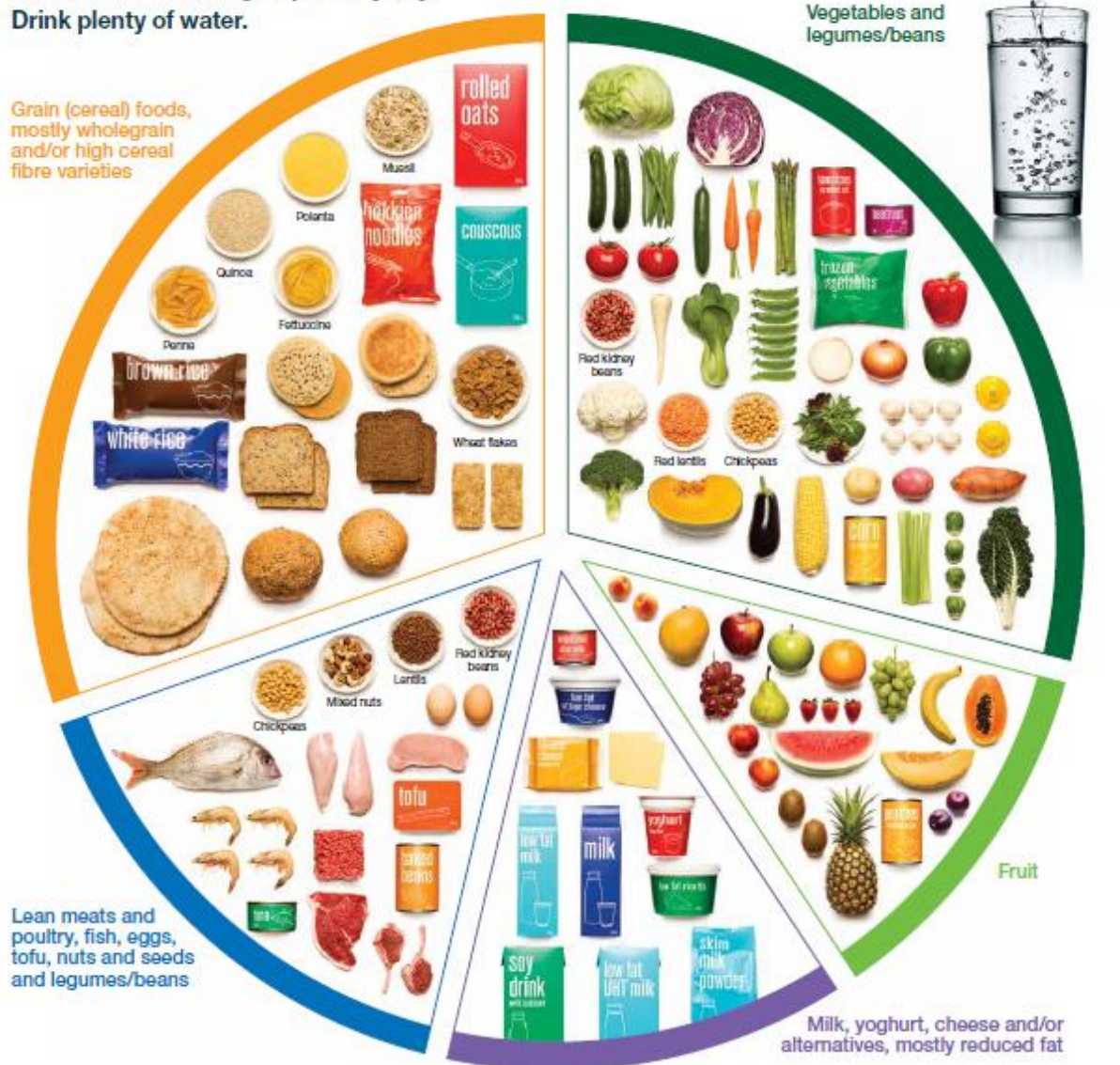
### **Starting solids:**

- Breast milk, or formula, provides babies with all the nutritional requirements that their bodies need until around 6 months of age. At this stage babies often start to show signs that they are ready for solids. These include: an increased interest in what people are eating, chewing on objects, and an increased strength of the sucking reflex.
- Solids will be introduced on parents/carers' advice and in conjunction with nutritional guidelines. Staff/carers may provide advice to parents/carers on what foods to introduce to the baby and methods of introduction.
- The service will prepare freshly prepared foods for the babies to the consistency that is required. The service will further assist the parents/carers in introducing solids by offering the foods that are being offered at home. Parents/carers are asked to inform the service as they introduce new foods.

\*LDC is a breastfeeding friendly centre and breastfeeding is encouraged for all mothers.

# Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.  
Drink plenty of water.



Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts

