

NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY POLICY

Our Service recognises the importance of safe food handling and healthy eating to promote the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care. We acknowledge that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating. Our Service therefore recognises the importance of supporting families to provide healthy food and drink to their children.

We are committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. We support and promote the NSW Health initiative *Munch & Move* and utilise the Australian Government's *Get Up & Grow- Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* and *Eat for Health* resources.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
80	Weekly menu
90	Medical conditions policy
91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

PURPOSE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) Services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that Highland Grove Preschool partners with families to provide education about nutrition and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with chronic adult conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Our Service recognises the importance of healthy eating for the growth, development, and wellbeing of young children and is committed to promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices for children in our care. This policy affirms our position on the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in our care and the promotion and education of healthy choices for optimum nutrition.

We believe in providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children, as we commit to implementing and embedding the healthy eating key messages outlined in the NSW Health's *Munch & Move* program into our curriculum and to support the *National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings* outlined in the *Get Up & Grow* resources.

Our Service is also committed to ensuring consistently high standards of food preparation and food storage and transportation are adhered to.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, visitors, and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has a responsibility to help children to develop good food practices and approaches, by working with families and educators.

All food prepared by the Service or families will endeavour to be consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Mealtimes reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where educators engage in meaningful conversations with children. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Program. All kitchens and food preparation areas will comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ). All staff involved in the stages of food handling have the skills and knowledge to ensure food safety is a priority.

NUTRITION

[Highland Grove preschool is breast-feeding friendly.](#)

Our Service will:

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

Our Service will:

Where food is provided by the Service:

- provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious seasonal fruit for afternoon tea and milk and water as a drink at this time
- plan and display the Service menu on the daily routine in each room
- display a list of allergies near to where afternoon tea is provided
- respect and accommodate children's cultural or religious dietary practices as requested by families

Where food is brought from home:

- ask families to place morning tea and lunch items, which are perishable (such as yogurt, meat filled sandwiches and cheese) in the clearly labeled room baskets in the preschool fridge.
- ask families to label each item being stored in this way with the child's name and the date using the markers in the playrooms or attached to the fridge. (Our educators support this practice with reminders to families and carers). (This practice does not occur during COVID outbreak period, due to congregating around the refrigerator).
- provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and that are suitable for children's lunchboxes
- provide information to families on how to read the *Nutritional Information Panel* on food and drink labels
- encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided in their lunchbox, such as sandwiches, fruit, cheese and yoghurt, before eating any less nutritious food provided
- strongly discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt, and/or sugar, and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include sweet biscuits, some muesli bars, breakfast bars and fruit filled bars, and chips.
- food items that should not be brought to the service include confectionary (lollies, sweets, chocolate, jelly), deep fried foods (chicken nuggets, fish fingers) and sugary drinks (cordial, energy drinks).

MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/EDUCATORS WILL:

- ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment
- 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
- ensure that children do not share lunches
- in the case of a child arriving at preschool without their lunch, a sandwich, crackers and fruit is provided. (Fresh bread is always stored in the centre freezer and defrosted when required).

- ensure all children are always supervised children whilst eating and drinking
- encourage and provide opportunities for staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition
- display nutritional information for families and keep them regularly updated
- consider the needs of various age groups at the service- meal times may be offered progressively or at different times
- not allow food to be used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe
- not allow the children to be force fed or being required to eat food they do not like or more than they want to eat
- encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes
- establish healthy eating habits in the children by incorporating nutritional information into our program

FOOD HYGIENE

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov. 2019).

Our Service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

Buying and transporting food

Our Service will:

- always check labels for the 'use by' and 'best before' dates, understanding that 'use by' dates apply to perishable foods that could potentially cause food poisoning if out of date, whilst 'best before' dates refer to food items with long shelf life but quality could be compromised
- avoid buying food items in damaged, swollen, leaking or dented packaging
- always check eggs within cartons: Never buy dirty or cracked eggs.
- never buy any food item if unsure about its quality
- Regulatory health authorities suggest that left over, open or perishable food is not returned to families and is disposed of

Online shopping

- ensure products selected are high quality
- ensure products are unpacked promptly upon receiving goods
- use online service company with product and guarantee

Storing food

Our Service will:

- ensure the refrigerators have a thermometer and that the refrigerators are maintained at 5°C or below
- ensure fridge temperatures are checked daily
- store dry foods in labelled and sealed, air-tight containers if not in original packaging.
- store dry foods in cupboards or if in a walk-in pantry, on shelving no lower than 30cm from the floor
- not place anything on the floor of a walk-in pantry (as containers of any type create easy access to shelves for mice and rats).
- store bulk dry foods only in food-safe and airtight containers
- use the FIFO (first in, first out) rule for all foods (dry, chilled, and frozen) to ensure rotation of stock so that older stock is used first
- store cleaning supplies separate to food items.

Preparing and serving food

Our Service will:

- wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly under clean running water before preparation
- ensure unused washed fruit or vegetables are thoroughly dry before returning to storage
- ensure food that has been dropped on the floor is immediately discarded
- thoroughly clean kitchen utensils and equipment between using with different foods and/or between different tasks
- avoid cross-contamination by ensuring that separate knives and utensils are used for different foods
- ensure that gloves are changed between handling different foods or changing tasks
- ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels
- ensure all educators and staff are aware of children who have severe allergic reactions to certain foods as per ASCIA Action Plans
- ensure that unwell staff do not handle food. An educator who has been away from work with gastroenteritis symptoms (vomiting and /or diarrhoea) will not prepare or serve food for 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.

Cleaning

Our Service will:

- ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation
- ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitised before use
- ensure that all dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and allowed to air dry or placed in the dishwasher
- ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight
- ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair

- prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently
- ensure that floor mops are thoroughly cleaned and air dried after each use
- replace any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling.

All staff handling food will:

- ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks
- ensure gloves are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- ensure food is stored at safe temperatures (below 5°C)
- discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils

Creating a positive learning environment

Our Service will:

- 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
- choose water as a preferred drink
- 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 (at afternoon teatime), 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
- encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat
- not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes
- role-model and discuss safe food handling with children

Service Program

Our Service will:

- 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
- embed the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in everyday activities and experiences.

Cooking with children

Cooking can help develop children's knowledge and skills regarding healthy eating habits. Cooking is a great, fun activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills. On these occasions participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

Communicating with families

Our Service will:

- ensure that a copy of the *Nutrition and Food Safety Policy* is available to all families
- provide opportunities for families 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 Highland Grove 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
- communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on appropriate food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.
- discuss discretionary choices- (food and beverages which are not necessary as part of a balanced diet) with families and if necessary, put aside for children to enjoy at home. If there are no other items in the lunchbox, alternative healthy food will be offered to children.

BIRTHDAYS

Whilst we are committed to healthy food practice, birthdays are very important in a child's life and at Highland Grove we like to make them as enjoyable as possible. Please feel free to send along a cake (or cup cakes are always wonderful) on your child's birthday so they can celebrate with their friends. Whether your cake is homemade, or shop bought, please include a list of ingredients to assist with allergies. (Shops and bakeries are getting used to this now). Please avoid sending bags of lollies or ice blocks for children's birthdays. You may like to check with your child's teacher about how many children attend on the given day.

If you do not want your child to participate in birthdays or other celebrations, due to religious or other reasons, please notify our staff. Families with children suffering food allergies are asked to provide the centre with cakes made at home which meet the child's dietary needs. These cakes are kept in our freezer and defrosted on the morning of a child bringing cake to celebrate a birthday, so the child can participate in the event with their peers.

Families are notified when a playroom has celebrated a birthday via our Daily News Sheets.

Source

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