

**Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy**

Our Service recognises the importance of 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 support and promote the *Right Bite Strategy*.

**NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)**

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| **QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY** |
| 2.1 | Health | Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted |
| 2.1.3 | Healthy lifestyles | Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child |

**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 our Service 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 into our curriculum.

**SCOPE**

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

**NUTRITION**

**Promoting healthy food and drinks based on the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and the *Right Bite Strategy***

Our Service will:

* 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, soft drinks)

Educators will:

* 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 all children remain seated while eating and drinking
* ensure all children are always supervised children whilst eating and drinking
* encourage and provide opportunities for staff and educators to undertake professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition
* 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 children to be independent and develop social skills at meal times
* establish healthy eating habits in the children by incorporating nutritional information into our program
* talk to families about their child’s food intake and voice any concerns about their child’s eating
* encourage parents to the best of our ability to continue our healthy eating message in their homes

**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
* only provide water
* 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 and provide opportunities for children 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

**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
* 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.

**Communicating with families**

Our Service will:

* provide a copy of the Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy to all families upon orientation at the Service
* 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 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
* 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, remove items from children’s lunch boxes. Alternative healthy food will be offered to children.

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| **Policy Reviewed** | May 2022 | **Next Review Date** | May 2023 |

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| **Policy Reviewed** | **Modifications** | **Next Review Date** |
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