



Policy and Procedures Dental care

Background

While there have been steady improvements in the oral health of children over the last 20 years, many young children still suffer from dental decay. This can mean pain, sleepless nights and sometimes major dental treatment including extraction of teeth under a general anesthetic.

Good oral health benefits children's general health. Good oral health is important for young children to help them eat, talk, smile and develop self-esteem. Deciduous (first) teeth are important as they guide the eruption and development of permanent teeth.

Purpose

It is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and good oral health. All members of our service, including educators, staff, children and families will be supported to meet this policy.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- Create environments that support good oral health and general health
- Encourage children to make healthy food and drink choices.

Definitions

Healthy eating: Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are:

- Fresh fruit
- Vegetables
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans.

Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.¹

Nutrition: The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.¹

'Everyday' foods and drinks: Foods and drinks that can be eaten daily that isn't high in fat, sugar and salt from the five food groups. Drinks being water and plain milk.

'Sometimes' foods and drinks: Sometimes foods are high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these.² They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged. This can include but limited to: chocolate, confectionary, jelly, sweet biscuits, chips, ice cream, deep fried foods, pastry-based foods, fast food, processed meats, soft drinks, fruit juice, cordial, sports drinks, and flavoured milk.



Oral Health: Eating, speaking and socializing without discomfort or embarrassment.³

Healthy Physical Environment

- Nutrition in early childhood years is critical for growth and development. Children should be encouraged to enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods. Caregivers such as children's services staff can foster sound food habits by understanding eating behavior as part of the child's normal pattern of development (NHMRC, 2012). The Children's Services Regulations 2011 require the Centre to ensure that food supplied at the Centre is appropriate to children's growth and cultural and developmental needs.
- The centre promotes and encourages the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables on a daily basis and healthy food options in line with the Australian Guidelines.
- Children are encouraged to taste a wide variety of foods with a range of flavours, colours, textures and aromas through menus and food experiences.
- The service menu has been reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service and meets the criteria determined.
- Encouraging older infants up to preschool-aged children to rinse their mouth out with water or drink a glass of water after eating.
- Children are encouraged to drink water after meals and snacks. Families are encouraged to support tooth brushing in the home.
- Ensuring that sweetened drinks and sometimes foods (juices, cordials and soft drinks) are not provided by the service, only tap water and plain milk are provided
- Ensuring tap water for drinking available to children throughout the day
- Cooking and food experiences provided in the service focus on healthy food options and promote fruit and vegetables.
- Staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning.
- Foods provided which are culturally appropriate, varies, and meet the children's development needs.

Healthy social environment

- The centre provides a positive eating environment with relaxed, social and enjoyable experiences by:
 - Educators and staff sitting with the children at meal and snack times to role model healthy eating and for socialization and learning.
 - Encouraging independence at meal and snack times.
 - Giving children plenty of time to eat and socialize.
- Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time
- As role models, educators and staff are encouraged to bring foods and drinks in line with the Centre's healthy eating and oral health policy.
- Healthy body image and an enjoyment of eating are encouraged by the service
- Food from diverse cultural backgrounds and traditional beliefs are respected and valued within the centre.



- Children learn basic hygiene principles and develop tooth brushing skills by brushing their own teeth.

Regular Dental Visits

Children should see an oral health professional (including a Maternal and Child Health Nurse, Dentist, Oral Health Therapist, Dental Therapist) by the age of two for an oral health assessment.

Learning and Skills

- Encouraging children, staff and families to understand the value of good oral hygiene and tooth brushing.
- Educators and staff involve children in healthy food experiences through growing and cooking.
- Educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating and oral health initiatives for children.

Engaging children, educators, staff and families

- The centre provides information to families regarding the importance of regular dental visits by providing families with details of local dental services that are available for their children to visit
- The centre promotes awareness in oral hygiene to all families, children and staff through poster, pamphlets and tip cards
- The centre discusses with children age appropriate tooth brushing and why it is important
- Families and children from culturally diverse backgrounds are consulted to ensure cultural values and expectations about food, eating and oral health are respected.
- Informing parents immediately when a dental injury has occurred and seeking dental advice.
- The Centre being involved in oral health programs such as Smiles 4 Miles (more information about this program can be found at <https://www.dhsv.org.au/oral-health-programs/smiles4miles>)

Community partnerships

- The centre works with local health professionals, services and other organisations to support educators and staff to deliver and promote healthy eating and oral health initiatives.

This policy has been developed with management, educators, staff, children and families.



References:

- *Oral Health Promotion: A Resource Pack for Children's Services*, Dental Health Services Victoria, October 2003
- *Oral health professional information for early educators*, Dental Health Services Victoria: https://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/educators-early-childhood_sourced_August_2014.
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- *Staying Healthy - Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services 5th Edition*, November 2012

Legislations

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2018*

BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any educator or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Version: 5	Endorsed By: CoM	Approved Date: 2008	Reviewed Date: January 2018
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It is the responsibility for all staff to read understand this policy within 14 days of publication. All staff are to sign and date below once you have read and understood the content of this policy

Date:	Print Name	Signature