



Policy and Procedures Nutrition

Introduction

During early childhood, many food habits are developed which may continue throughout life. Therefore, at an early age it is important for food to be nutritious as well as meeting social, cultural and educational needs of children.

Mealtimes provide a valuable opportunity to build an environment that enhances children sense of being, becoming and belonging. We value the social development that meal time provides, therefore we ensure that they are positive, relaxed and social and represent a family life atmosphere.

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

The Centre's goals are to:

- Provide fresh, nutritious and varied meals that reflect the cultural background of the children and where children have the opportunity to try new foods.
- Provide children with opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health and healthy lifestyles.
- To provide a positive, relaxed and social meal times. Promote healthy eating and the benefits of making good food choices.
- Promote the importance of tap drinking water.
- To ensure in all possible ways that food is safe for children to eat
- Encourage all members of the service community to role model healthy eating habits by bringing in foods and drinks in line with the services Nutrition policy.
- 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.
- Ensure the children participate in a range of active play experiences both indoors and outdoors.
- Promote healthy eating, drinking water and active play experiences within the centre environment and in the wider community.

To achieve our goals Acacia educators and staff will:

- Provide parents with information in regards to nutritious foods for children to eat through newsletters, notice board displays, communication app and verbal discussions.
- Promote a respect for food and its purpose.



- Encourage all members of the service to role model hygienic practices when handling and eating food.
- Obtain current information on children allergies from families and health professionals. Ensure individual allergy management plans are followed and displayed for all educators and staff.
- Ensure that all educators and staff receive adequate food handling training to eliminate the risk of cross contamination and unsafe practices.
- Demonstrate meal and snack times as a positive, educational and enjoyable part of the daily routine.

Strategies to achieve these goals Acacia will implement the following:

- Breastfeeding is supported by providing areas for mothers to breastfeed, provide a fridge/freezer to support storage of breastmilk.
- Provide food that is age / stage appropriate.
- Do not accept food provide by parents or children to share with other children.
- Cater for children with special dietary requirements.
- Make tap water available for children to drink throughout the day. Children under 12 months of age will have cooled boiled water offered as an alternative fluid to breast milk or formula. Older children will be provided with water as they require through jugs that are accessible to children.
- Offer only plain milk and tap water at morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. Sweetened drinks are not provided to the children.
- Present food in an appealing way, offering a range of colors, textures, flavors and diversity that gives children a variety of choice.
- Place emphasis on fruit and vegetables as an important part of the menu planning.
- Special celebrations are recognised with limited use of 'sometimes foods' where the emphasis is on the occasion rather than focusing on food.
- Frequently review the menu to ensure that foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar are not included
- Take into account the cultural backgrounds when planning the menus. Families are welcome to participate in this process.
- Display details of food eaten by the children on the daily information board.
- Staff sit with children when they are eating and drinking for role modelling, safety and learning. Staff role model on hygiene, safety and eating healthy food when they interact with the children at meal and snack times Offer healthy snacks at regular and predictable intervals.



- All serves offered to children are at a suitable serving size which control left to child on how much they eat.
- Develop children's independence in self-feeding, serving and managing utensils for eating and drinking.
- Do not offer food as a reward, incentive or for comfort instead encouragement and positive feedback are provided to motivate children.
- Emphasize consistently to children the need and reason for hygiene, such as washing hands and eating own food rather than others.
- Offer breakfast for children who are in before 8.30 am. This will consist of Weetbix, or porridge.
- Finish lunch with fruit and with a drink of water.
- Accept only infant formula in unopened tin from parent or expressed breast milk in a labeled bottle or container.
- Welcome parent's advice on the Centre's menu. Favorite recipes are found in our newsletters or in the parent's resources.
- Educators will be supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating initiatives to children and families.

To prevent choking situations:

- Staff will supervise children at all times when eating
- Children are also required to be seated at all times when eating
- Children will not be offered food while laughing or upset.
- Food will be cut into suitable pieces before being offered to children.
- Foods to avoid to prevent choking, such as hard fruit and vegetables, like raw carrot or apple (unless grated, finely sliced, mashed), nuts, popcorn, lollies, sausages/hot dogs and grapes.

Menus are planned to meet the guidelines set out by the Department of Health. Our menu, if applicable, is assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service to ensure it meets Australian Guidelines and best practice.

All meals are prepared on the premises, using fresh and cooked ingredients purchased from approved suppliers.

Special dietary requirements are taken into consideration e.g. food allergies, cultural and religious preferences. If your child has special dietary requirements or allergies, please let the director during enrolment or as soon as it is diagnosed.

This policy has been developed with management, staff families and children and is available in the centre's foyer.



Menus at Acacia's centres

When planning menus we ensure that they are nutritionally balanced and that all food groups set in The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating are included.

The food groups consist of:

- Breads and Cereals
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives

When looking at what to offer on our menus we adhere to the Guidelines for Infant feeding, Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health, State Government of Victoria, 2012

Offer 1 children's serve of lean meat, poultry, fish or alternatives per child per day.

One children's serve is equivalent to:

- 50g raw lean red meat (e.g. beef, lamb, and kangaroo), lean pork or poultry without the bone
- 30g lean cooked red meat
- 40g cooked chicken (skin off)
- 60g raw fish or 50g canned or cooked fish
- 35g dry weight beans or legumes or 85g (. cup) cooked or canned beans or legumes
- 15g peanut butter or nuts (if centre policy allows)
- 1 egg
- 20g dry weight Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)
- 85g tofu
- 60g hummus.

Lean red meat should be served **4** times per fortnight, lean pork or poultry **2** times per fortnight and fish **1–2** times per fortnight. Lean ham or lean bacon may be included on the menu once or twice per week.

Other processed meats should not be included on the menu.

This includes sausages, sausage mince, frankfurts, hot dogs, salami, Strasburg, Devon, middle bacon and some commercial chicken and fish products.

Include vegetarian meals on the menu *at least once* per fortnight for variety.

Vegetarian meals should include:

- a food containing protein: eggs, legumes (e.g. chickpeas), milk, yoghurt, cheese, soy products (e.g. tofu)
- a food containing iron (if not already included): spinach, legumes (e.g. chickpeas), baked beans, peas, tofu, eggs and broccoli

AND

- a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C to enhance iron absorption by the body: capsicum, broccoli, kiwifruit, Brussels sprouts, paw paw, cauliflower, orange, mandarin, berries, cabbage, cantaloupe, frozen mixed vegetables, broad beans, spinach, sweet potato, potato, pineapple, cherries, raw tomato, zucchini, peas and green beans

Offer 1 children's serve of fruit* per child per day.

One children's serve of fruit is equivalent to:



- 75g fresh fruit (1 small piece, medium piece)
- 75g (. cup) diced, cooked or canned fruit
- 15g dried fruit.

A variety of fruit should be provided, at least 2–3 different types per day and 5 different types per week.

Dried fruit leaves a sticky residue on teeth and can contribute to tooth decay. If included on the menu it should be offered no more than once per week and preferably with other food.

** Some hard fruit may need to be cooked, mashed, grated, pureed or very finely sliced to prevent choking.*

Offer 1–1½ children's serves of vegetables* and legumes per child per day.

One children's serve of vegetables and legumes is equivalent to:

- 75g fresh, frozen, canned or cooked vegetables (. cup cooked, 1 cup salad, 1 small potato)
- 30g dry weight beans or legumes or 75g (. cup) cooked or canned beans or legumes.

A variety of vegetables and/or legumes should be provided, at least 2–3 different types per day and 5 different types per week.

** Some hard vegetables may need to be cooked, mashed, grated, pureed or very finely sliced to prevent choking.*

Offer 2 children's serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese or calcium fortified alternatives per child per day.

One children's serve is equivalent to:

- 100ml milk/calcium fortified soy drink
- 50ml evaporated milk
- 15g milk powder
- 100ml custard
- 80g yoghurt/calcium fortified soy yoghurt
- 15g hard cheese (1 slice), 50g ricotta cheese.

Cream, sour cream and butter are not substitutes for milk, yoghurt and cheese.

It is recommended that milk is offered as a drink at morning tea and/or afternoon tea every day. Full fat varieties of milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives should be used for children less than 2 years of age. Reduced fat milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives are suitable for children over the age of 2 years.

Ensure alternative products such as soy drink and soy yoghurt are calcium fortified (with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL).

Offer 2 children's serves of grain (cereal) foods per child per day. Include high fibre (wholemeal and wholegrain) varieties at least 3 times per week, preferably every day.

One children's serve of grain (cereal) food is equivalent to:

- 40g bread (1 slice, medium roll or flatbread)
- 1 crumpet or small English muffin
- 30g breakfast cereal flakes ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup), 2 Weetbix™ or similar, cup muesli or porridge
- 30g dry weight rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, barley, buckwheat, semolina, cornmeal, quinoa, polenta (Cup cooked)
- 35g flour (cup)
- 35g crispbread (3–4 cracker biscuits or crispbread , 3 thick rice cakes, 6 thin rice cakes or corn thins, 12 plain rice crackers).



Use mostly polyunsaturated (e.g. sunflower, safflower) and/or monounsaturated (e.g. canola, olive, peanut, sunflower, soybean, and sesame) oils and spreads in cooking and baking.

Avoid palm, cottonseed and coconut oils or oil blends that contain these, as well as cream, butter, cophera, ghee and lard.

'Sometimes foods' should not be included on the menu.

'Sometimes foods' are high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these⁷. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged. Examples of 'sometimes foods' include:

- chocolate, confectionery, jelly
- sweet biscuits, high fat/salt savoury biscuits, chips
- high sugar/high fat cakes and slices
- cream, ice cream
- deep fried foods (e.g. hot chips) and pastry based foods (pies, sausage rolls and pasties)
- most fast food and takeaway foods
- some processed meats (e.g. sausages, frankfurts/hot dogs, salami, Strasburg, Devon, some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers)
- soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and flavoured mineral water.

Salt should not be added to cooking or be available at the table.

Salt is often added to foods that are processed (e.g. some breakfast cereals and bread), preserved (e.g. tuna in brine, smoked goods, ham) or cooked in salty solutions (e.g. some sauces or stocks) or foods that have flavours added (e.g. some savoury biscuits and pasta sauces).

When selecting packaged foods, choose 'low salt', 'reduced salt' or 'no added salt' products. Use herbs and spices to enhance the flavour of meals.

Morning tea and afternoon tea should be planned and documented on the menu.

Foods included at morning tea and afternoon tea should be nutritious and based on foods from the basic food groups.

These may include milk based custard, yoghurt, cheese, eggs, legumes (e.g. baked beans), healthy dips (e.g. hummus), fruit, vegetables, breads, reduced salt crackers and crispbread and baked items such as pikelets, scones and muffins which use some wholemeal flour and are not high in sugar and fat.

Morning tea and afternoon tea should not include 'sometimes foods'. Baked items should not be provided every day.

An extra snack is recommended for children attending eight or more hours in care. If you offer a late snack it should be documented on the menu.

Late snacks should not include 'sometimes foods'.

If breakfast is provided it should be based on grains (breads and cereals) as well as milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives.

Breads and cereals offered should be mostly wholemeal or wholegrain and low in added sugars. Fruits and vegetables are also good choices to be included in breakfast.



Water is the best drink option for children and should be available at all meals and freely throughout the day.

Plain milk is another healthy drink option for children. Full-fat milk should be given to children under the age of 2 years.

Reduced-fat milk is suitable for children over 2 years of age.

Breastfeeding should be encouraged and breast milk should be given to children if it is provided by their families.

Soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and flavoured mineral water should not be included on the menu.

The menu should be varied and should meet the social and cultural needs of children.

This means that:

- the menu includes a variety of meals from different cultures
- the menu includes a variety of tastes, colours, textures (e.g. crunchy, soft) and flavours
- main meals are not repeated in a two-week menu cycle
- the main ingredient in a meal is not repeated on the same day each week (e.g. fish is not provided every Friday only).

Reference

- Guidelines for Infant feeding, Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health, State Government of Victoria, 2012
- Food Safety Victoria, www.foodsafety.vic.gov.au
- Australian Government Department Publishing:
[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/EA1E1000D846F0AFCA257BF0001DADB3/\\$File/HEPA%20-%20A4%20Book%20-%20Directors%20Book%20-%20LR.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/EA1E1000D846F0AFCA257BF0001DADB3/$File/HEPA%20-%20A4%20Book%20-%20Directors%20Book%20-%20LR.pdf)
- <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources>
- 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

Version: 6	Endorsed By: CoM	Approved Date: 2007	Reviewed Date: May 2018
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