

Montessori Works

Background

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 30).

Policy statement

This Policy details the Service's approach to mealtimes when the food and beverages consumed by children while at the Service are provided by the Service. It also describes the way educators use mealtimes for a happy and social occasion, and for developing lifelong healthy food choices.

Strategies and practices

- The Service's *Nutrition, Food and Beverage* Policy is explained to parents at enrolment.
- At enrolment, parents provide the Service with details of their child's food and drink allergies and of any cultural preferences in food. The enrolment form has provision for parents to provide the Service with details of any special dietary requirements (e.g. allergies, culture, religion, food preferences). Parents are asked to update this information when any changes occur.
- The Service serves all of the children's food and drink requirements over the day – with the exception of babies' bottles. The food and drink are nutritious, appropriate to each child (as detailed in the enrolment form) and consistent with *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*, and/or *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*.
- The weekly menu accurately describes the food and beverages for each day and is displayed prominently for parents.
- The menu includes a variety of meals and snacks to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food options including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- The Service maintains a list and photographs of children with special food requirements for health or medical reasons (e.g. allergies, intolerances). This information is displayed in the food preparation areas and strategically throughout the Service. Relief staff are informed of these dietary requirements before they are allowed to serve the children meals.
- Meals served to children with dietary requirements/restrictions and allergies/intolerances are served on distinctive plates or alternatively pre-served and labelled with the child's name.

Nutrition, Food and Beverages

- Appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around six months of age including iron rich nutritious foods as infant's first foods. Educators are not allowed to introduce foods that the parent has not already introduced due to allergies and intolerances.
- The texture of food offered between six and 12 months of age is adjusted to match the infant's developmental stage.
- Food is presented attractively.
- The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the website and up-to-date materials from recognised authorities.
- Educators promote healthy eating in children by including the topic in daily routines and in other intentional teaching such as role-modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, using different cultural meal settings, and cooking experiences. Children's preferences and comments about the menu are recorded daily on the Menu Daily Feedback Form which informs future menus.
- Meal times are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition.
- If children are involved in cooking experiences, they must have their hands washed, hair tied back and educate children of safety using heat and any electric cooking utensils. Educators must determine whether all children are allowed to participate due to allergies during the cooking experience. Alternatives are prepared in advance.
- Good oral health is promoted through learning experiences and daily 'swish and swallow' practice.
- Developmentally appropriate eating utensils and furniture are provided for each child. Children, including toddlers, are encouraged to be independent and develop social skills at meal times.
- Food is never used to reward or punish children.
- Children are encouraged to eat, but they are not required to taste new foods, to eat food they do not like or to eat more than they want.
- Safe drinking water is readily accessible to children at all times, and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals.
- Children who are hungry outside of meal times are given food.
- Staff follow all regulatory requirements for preparing and serving food. These include handwashing, wearing gloves, using tongs to handle food, ensuring children do not share utensils or use those that have been dropped. (Refer to the Service's *Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy*).

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- Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the child's Communication Book (infants and toddlers) and Daily Feedback Sheet (older children). Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well.
- Foods likely to cause choking such as carrot and celery sticks, are not served to children under 2 years.
- Babies are fed individually by educators when necessary.
- Birthdays are an important part of a child's life, and educators and children are encouraged to celebrate them at the Service. Parents are welcome to bring a cake to share. Only purchased cakes still in the original wrap or container, with a current use-by date and a full list of ingredients, can be brought into the Service. Educators are required to check the cake ingredients list before serving to ensure that children with allergies are not served the cake if it contains their allergens. Alternatively, services can celebrate children's birthdays in a fun, exciting and healthy way as such decorated room, meal chair, tables, balloons, dance party, birthday themed experiences, birthday picnic or birthday badge. A large fruit platter can be made together instead of a cake.
- The Service is a nut free (nut aware) zone, and no nuts or nut products are served.
- The Service provides staff with appropriate training in safe food handling. They are provided with current information on nutrition for young children, with special regard to cultural preferences.
- Food is currently supplied by Kids Gourmet Food (KGF) and we encourage parents to go to their website to review and provide feedback
- Educators are encouraged to breastfeed their infant/child and are given the flexibility to do so.

Additional safe practices for babies

- Provide mothers with a private, clean and quiet place to breastfeed their infant or express breastmilk. The place will include an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, a change table and a handwashing facility nearby.
- Have space allocated in the fridge for expressed breast milk.
- Have easily accessible brochures, pamphlets and other resources regarding breastfeeding for families.
- Refer mothers with concerns regarding breastfeeding to appropriate contacts and resources such as the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- Breastmilk should come labelled with child's name, date and time expressed. If thawed, milk will also be labelled with the date and time thawed.
- Ensure to work with the family of the infant taking breastmilk to drink from a bottle prior to starting care.
- Provide an open-door policy for mothers to drop in and breastfeed their infant whenever they need to.
- Ensure that expecting and new mothers are aware of the services policies regarding breastfeeding and that the service is a breastfeeding friendly environment.

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- Have signage, policies and procedures near breastfeeding room for mothers and visitors to the service to see.
- Babies should be held while being fed bottles.
- If a baby is accidentally fed incorrect breastmilk, treat the incident as an accidental exposure to a bodily fluid. An incident report will need to be completed and both affected families informed.

Responsibilities of parents

- To provide the Service with details of their child's known food allergies at enrolment, and to inform the Service immediately if and when any changes occur. To discuss their child's food allergies, if any, with them (older children) and to ensure they understand the importance of not sharing food.

Procedures and forms

- Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) – and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure

Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Injuries, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Student, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regulation	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
Regulation	78	Food and beverages
Regulation	90	Medical conditions policy
Regulation	91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
Regulation	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
Regulation	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

NQS	QA2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
NQS	QA2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
NQS	QA2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child
NQS	QA2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
NQS	QA5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included

Sources

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- Better Health. (2017). *Breast milk – expressing breastmilk*. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/breastfeeding-expressing-breastmilk>
- Early Years Learning Framework 2009
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 (September 2020 Update): Section 4 – Operational Requirements <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf>
- NSW Health. *Breast feeding your baby*. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/Publications/breastfeeding-your-baby.pdf>
- National Health and Medical Research Council - <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1>
- Western Sydney Local Health District Make it Happen Resources - <https://www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Healthy-Children/Our-Programs/Munch-Move/Munch-Move-Resources/Making-it-Happen-Resources#sample>
- NSW Health Munch & Move program resources available on the Healthy Kids website www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au
- Australian Dietary Guidelines, 2013, www.eatforhealth.gov.au
- Infant Feeding Guidelines, 2012, www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Further reading and useful websites (Consistent with the approach of the National Quality Framework, the following references have prioritised efficacy and appropriateness to inform best practice, and legislative compliance over state or territory preferences.)

- Australian Breastfeeding Association – <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>
- Nutrition Australia. (2009). *Get up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for early Childhood (Staff and Carer handbook)*. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection>
- Nutrition Australia. (2017). <https://nutritionaustralia.org/fact-sheets/adgs-recommended-daily-intakes/#Children>
- Nutrition Australia – <https://nutritionaustralia.org/category/programs/early-childhood-oshc/>
- National Health and Medical Research Council - <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- Nutrition Australia - <https://nutritionaustralia.org/division/qld/qlds-food-foundations-program-for-early-years-settings/>

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part of the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Nutrition, Food and Beverages

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	
2	6 September 2019	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
3	29 November 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
4	30 December 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
5	May 2022	ACA NSW	Updated references Added points regarding creating a breastfeeding friendly workplace Added points regarding birthday celebrations. Added points of providing food for babies under 12 months	
6	August 2022	Susan Chahwan	Adapted ACA NSW policy	