

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety Nutrition



Introduction

- This policy concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in care.
- Kootingal & District Preschool is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* as outlined in the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources. The service will also refer to other government bodies such as the Department of Health, the National Health Medical Research Council and state/territory public health initiatives (for example: Munch & Move in NSW) in relation to healthy eating and menu planning resources.
- Further, we recognise the importance of supporting families in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating.
- The service is committed to ensuring adequate health and hygiene practices are followed when handling preparing and storing food as per the Food Standards Code and Food Act 2023

Research has shown that one in five preschoolers are either overweight or obese. By the time children in NSW reach kindergarten, almost 18% are either overweight or obese. The 2007 National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found that the dietary patterns of many Australian children are less than optimal with high consumption of salt and saturated fat, and low consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Given that children are increasingly spending long periods of time in centre-based care, Early Childhood Educators can role model healthy eating and encourage young children to make healthier food choices. This will contribute to the prevention of weight problems in children, allowing children to thrive physically, socially, and intellectually, and in turn contribute to prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases.

Conversations and information exchange on dental health should be encouraged to promote good dental hygiene practices and lifelong learning for children and their families. Dental health will be included as part of everyday practice at our education and care service.

Goals – What are we going to do?

Our service recognises the importance of healthy eating to the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care. We will encourage nutritional foods for children, avoiding food and drinks that have a sweet and sugary content. Water will be available at all times.

Strategies – to achieve our goals

Promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents

The service will:

Where food is brought from home:

- Provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and suitable for children's lunchboxes. This includes no nuts.

- 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.
- Discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt and sugar and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, oven-baked crackers and corn chips.

The service can accommodate some processed foods based on children's sensory processing needs where applicable.

Promote safety

- 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.
- Provide replacements if a food item does not meet recommendations
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Always supervise children while eating and drinking.

Safe food handling

- The service will apply current national food safety standards and recommendations, as well as information from applicable state/territory food authorities.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for cooking staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices
- Ensure gloves are worn or food tongs are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures ie below 5°C or above 60°C.
- Separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the staff
- The service will apply current national food safety standards and recommendations, as well as information from applicable state/territory food authorities.
 - Food Standards Code and Food Act 2003 (NSW) Standard 3.2.2A requirements **do not** apply to:
 - Services handling food supplied by parents or handling only packaged food
 - Services where food handling is part of an educational program and not a commercial offering
 - Services where the only potentially hazardous food served is milk
 - The handling of food to raise funds solely for community or charitable causes
 - Providing food for free

Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values

- 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.
- 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 children to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink – 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.
- Do not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood staff and families about healthy food and drink choices

- 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.

Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service

- Provide information about the Nutrition policy to all families upon orientation at the service. Families will be provided with opportunities 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 newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

Supporting families

- The service will provide families with up-to-date information on dietary requirements of young children to ensure optimal growth and development and provide families with opportunities to discuss ways to maximize the health and well-being of their child/ren.

Education and information

- Educators will engage children in learning experiences that are fun and enjoyable and incorporate key messages around healthy eating
- Implemented learning experiences will be guided by the EYLF principles and incorporate the child's identity
- Families will be provided with current information about recommended guidelines around dietary requirements, screen time and physical activity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility For
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Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011. ➤ Allocate finances for training and food safety. ➤ Ensure that the service implements adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service. ➤ Ensure all requirements under the Food Standards Code and Food Act 2023 are met.
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food are implemented at the service to minimise risks to children. ➤ Ensure children being cared for by the service have access to safe drinking water at all times and are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day. ➤ Ensure families are provided with information to encourage nutritional foods for children, avoiding food and drinks with a sweet sugary content. ➤ Ensure that, where food and beverages are supplied by the service, they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nutritious and adequate in quantity - Chosen with regard to the dietary requirements of individual children ➤ Ensure all requirements are met under the Food Safety Standards Code and Food Act are met. ➤ Maintain all records as required by the Food Safety Standards Code and Food Act 2023.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adhere to the strategies and practices of the Nutrition policy. ➤ Adhere to the Food Safety Standards Code and the Food Act 2023. ➤ Ensure children's individual dietary needs are adhered to. ➤ Provide positive mealtime experiences for children. ➤ Respect the individual needs and choices of children. ➤ Actively supervise children during mealtimes. Ensuring any children with allergies are further supervised. ➤ Adhere to the services <i>Hygiene and Infection Control</i> policy. ➤ Ensuring food is not used as a reward or withheld as a punishment ➤ Support children to access dental health resources for research, exploration and identification. These resources will be available through books, posters and visual aids. ➤ Talk with children about dental health during the day. This can be done by encouraging children to drink water throughout the day. ➤ Pay particular attention to meal and snack times where children will be encouraged to drink water after eating and before rest times, to rinse their mouths. ➤ Provide dental care information to families through newsletters, posters, professional visits, web links and brochures. ➤ Complete appropriate training as per service requirement.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences. ➤ Contribute menu ideas and recipes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pack nutritious lunches for children in relation to Munch & Move recommendations ➤ Ensure foods being sent do not contain nuts
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Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with Regulation 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Links to other policies:

Cleaning and Maintaining the Environment

Physical Activity and Small Screen Recreation

Providing a Child Safe Environment

Related Legislation:

NQS

Quality Area 1		Educational program and practice
<i>Standard</i>	1.2	<i>Practice</i>
Element	1.2.3	Child directed learning
Quality Area 2		Children's health and safety
<i>Standard</i>	2.1	<i>Health</i>
Element	2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle
Quality Area 5		Relationships with children
<i>Standard</i>	5.1	<i>Relationships between educators and children</i>
Element	5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child
Quality Area 6		Collaborative partnerships with partnerships with families and communities
<i>Standard</i>	6.1	<i>Supportive relationships with families</i>
Element	6.1.2	Parents views are respected

National Law

Section 167 Offence related to protection of children from harm and hazards

National Regulations

Reg	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
Reg	78	Food and beverages
Reg	90	Medical conditions policy
Reg	91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
Reg	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
Reg	168	Education and care service must have policies and practices
Reg	170	Policies and procedures to be followed

Reg	171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg	172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

Sources:

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au
- Healthy Kids NSW – www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au
- Nutrition Australia – www.nutritionaustralia.org
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand – www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Early Years Learning Framework V.2: Outcome 3 – Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health and personal safety
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- Raising Children Network – www.raisingchildren.net.au
- Health Insite - www.healthinsite.gov.au
- Health and Safety in Children's Centres: Model Policies and Practices (2nd ed.)
- NSW Food Authority – Children's services -
<https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/retail/childrens-services>
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand 2023
- NSW Government Food Authority

Developed: 2015

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