

Introduction

Good nutrition supports children's health, development and learning. Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to practise social, language and self-help skills, and experience and learn about healthy food choices. Implement this procedure alongside:

- [Hand washing Procedure](#)
- [Anaphylaxis and Allergies Procedure](#)
- [Undiagnosed Dietary Requirement Procedure](#)
- [C&K Childcare Centre Food Safety Program](#)

Nutrition

Teachers and educators will:

- Model and encourage nutritional eating habits and positive attitudes towards food.
- Provide a daily written record of food consumption for children under two years of age.
- Regularly promote nutritional food choices with children and families as outlined in the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) and [Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#).
- Respect family, religious and cultural food preferences. This may require food/meals to be heated.
- Do not withdraw food from children or make judgments about food provided by parents/guardians.
- Make drinking water accessible and encourage children to drink water throughout the day.
- Discuss oral health concepts with children and encourage children to drink water after meals.
- Never use food and drink to reward or punish a child.
- Complete the online food handler training '[I'm Alert](#)' or [Do Food Safely](#). Provide evidence of completion to centre Director/Responsible Person in Charge. Keep in centre personnel file. Optional for Kindergartens.

Childcare kitchen personnel will:

- Complete the online food handler training '[I'm Alert](#)' or [Do Food Safely](#). Provide evidence of completion to centre Director/Responsible Person in Charge. Keep in centre personnel file.
- Follow policies, records and information from accredited food safety program.
- Regularly discuss and confirm children's dietary requirements with parents/guardians upon and throughout enrolment.
- In consultation with children, families, teachers and educators, develop and implement delicious menus that meet:
 - Children's dietary needs including children with food allergies, intolerances and restrictions.
 - [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) and [Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#) recommendations. Refer to [Nutrition Australia QLD](#), an online menu planning tool.
- Respect family, religious and cultural food preferences.
- Model and encourage healthy eating habits and positive attitudes towards food.
- Make drinking water accessible and encourage children to drink water throughout the day.
- Display current menus that accurately describe all meals and beverages served to children including meals provided to infants and children with anaphylaxis, allergies and undiagnosed dietary requirements.

Mealtimes

Teachers and educators will:

- Support children to wash and dry their hands before and after meals.
- Support children to remain seated during mealtimes.
- Supervise children during mealtimes.
- Discuss nutritional eating habits with children rather than instructing them what to eat, what not to eat, what to eat first or how much to eat.
- Aim to make mealtimes pleasant and relaxed experiences:
 - Slow down to the pace of the children. Be patient with slow or fussy eaters.
 - Sit with and engage children in conversation.
 - When possible, set other tasks aside to be 'present'.
 - Consider strategies that influence the 'mood' at mealtimes, such as setting up tables in an attractive manner (e.g. flowers, placemats) and arranging tables to enable small group interaction.
- When developmentally appropriate, facilitate children's developing independence by supporting them to open lids, feeding themselves and assisting with mealtime tasks.
- Be responsive and flexible to individual hunger needs e.g. children eating at different times, enabling children to eat outside scheduled mealtimes.
- Provide age and developmentally appropriate mealtime utensils.
- Support children to use tongs when sharing food from a communal plate.
- Ensure children do not share eating utensils or food with others.
- Encourage children to turn away from food and cover their mouth with their elbow when they cough or sneeze.
- Never consume hot drinks in the vicinity of children; consume hot drinks in areas that are not used by children.
- Immediately after mealtimes, thoroughly wipe tables and chairs with a disposable paper towel (preferred) and soapy water (detergent and water). If using cloth towel, launder and sanitize after mealtime.

- Immediately clean food and milk spills with soapy water (detergent and water). When a significant amount of food and drink has been spilt during a mealtime, immediately after mealtimes, mop floors under and around tables with soapy water (detergent and water).

Preparing and serving meals

(Childcare only) Only kitchen personnel are permitted to prepare and plate meals to children with anaphylaxis, allergies and undiagnosed dietary requirements.

Teachers, educators and kitchen personnel will:

- Wash and dry hands before preparing and serving meals. Gloves do not need to be worn if hands are clean and dry.
- Wear gloves when preparing meals if hands have cuts or abrasions, fingers have acrylic nail polish or if wearing large rings. Cover hand cuts and abrasions with blue kitchen band aids.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before serving.
- Only prepare and serve food if you are well (no symptoms of disease such as sore throat, runny nose, diarrhoea or vomiting) and have no sores on your skin.
- Avoid the 'food danger zone' by cooking and heating food to 75°C. Refer to above diagram.
- Measure temperature of cooked or reheated food with a food thermometer. Clean food thermometer with alcohol wipes (must contain 70% isopropyl alcohol) before and after use.
- Allow cooked and heated food to cool before serving. Remove a small piece of food with a spoon to another plate and test temperature with a food thermometer or on the inside of wrist. Throw this piece of food away, wash spoon, and wash and dry hands.
- Use a separate bowl and spoon when feeding individual infants.
- When interrupted to care for another child while preparing food or spoon-feeding a baby, wash and dry hands again before continuing.
- Wash and dry used plates and cutlery in the designated (labelled) sink. (Childcare only) Send plates and cutlery to the kitchen to be sanitized in commercial dishwasher.



Food storage

Teachers, educators and kitchen personnel will:

- Display and follow [Food Safety Poster](#) and food storage [Food Safety Information Council](#) recommendations.
- Complete a twice daily check and maintain refrigerator temperature at 5°C or below as part of the [Daily Safety Checklist](#) and/or accredited food safety program.
- Respect family, religious and cultural food storage practices, except when inconsistent with recommended food safety guidelines e.g. perishable foods such as cooked foods, meats and dairy must be stored in refrigerator; cannot be stored at room temperature.
- Store:
 - Dairy products inside the body of the refrigerator; not in the refrigerator door.
 - Cooked food and uncooked meat separately in the refrigerator. Store raw meat on bottom shelf only.
- To prevent cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods:
 - Keep raw and cooked foods separate in the fridge.
 - Keep cooked food and ready-to-eat foods above raw food in the fridge.
 - Use separate utensils and equipment (such as cutting boards and knives) for raw and cooked food.
- Defrosted food should not be returned to the freezer. Heat and eat or discard.
- Never keep left over meals. Dispose of left over meals on same day as served. Tell parents and carers what food their child left, but do not send leftover food home.

Parents and guardians will:

- Upon arrival, remove food/containers from insulated containers and place child's food in designated area e.g. basket and/or refrigerator. Do not store food in insulated containers within the refrigerator. As per Food Safety Council advice, when stored in the fridge, temperature within insulated containers may fluctuate and be inconsistent with the fridge temperature. When multiple insulated containers are stored in a fridge, air flow within the fridge is impeded, which in turn may impact the fridge temperature.
- Place perishable foods (such as meats, cooked foods and dairy) in the refrigerator. Place dairy products in the body of the refrigerator; not in the refrigerator door.
- Seek direction from teachers and educators if unsure of centre food storage routine.

Bottle storage and preparation

Bottles of breastmilk and formula must be carefully prepared, stored and warmed. The same guidelines apply when you are preparing to give a baby a bottle as when you are preparing food for older children.

Teachers and educators will:

- Store bottles in the body of refrigerator; not in the refrigerator door.
- Clean bottle preparation surfaces before and after preparing bottles.
- Wash and dry hands before preparing bottles.
- Wear gloves when preparing breast milk.
- It is best to make up fresh formula for each feed and give it to the child as soon as it is ready. If this is not possible, the freshly made formula should be stored in the back of the refrigerator
- Complete *Bottle Register* when heating bottles.
- Heat bottles in bottle warmer; never in microwave. Heat bottles only once.
- Test temperature of milk with food thermometer or on inside of wrist. Temperature should feel comfortably warm (body temperature 36°C to 37°C.) or even a little bit cool.
- Discard any warmed milk that has not been used.
- When thawing frozen breast milk, use oldest milk first. Thaw in refrigerator and use within 24hrs OR thaw by standing bottle in a container of lukewarm water and use straight away.
- Clean used bottles in hot, soapy water, immediately after feeding and allow bottles to air dry. Do not attempt to sterilise bottles.
- Send bottles home at the end of the day.
- When applicable, provide a private, comfortable area for mothers who wish to breastfeed or express.

Parents and guardians will:

- Transport pre-prepared bottles in an insulated bag with an ice brick.
- Upon arrival, remove bottles from insulated bag and store in body of refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.
- Provide daily:
 - Required number of bottles; cleaned/sterilised and clearly labelled with child's name and preparation date.
 - Pre-prepared bottles OR provide pre-measured portions of formula powder.
- Complete *Bottle Register* daily upon arrival.
- When providing breast milk, supply in separate small quantities.
- Collect child's (used and unused) bottles at the end of the day.

Bottle feeding

Teachers and educators will:

- Complete *Bottle Register* immediately before bottle feeding. Document (via *Bottle Register*) a two-person visual check i.e. correct label, heated once in bottle warmer, correct milk/formula and provided to correct child.
- Wash and dry hands before and after feeding. There is no need to wear gloves if hands are clean and dry.
- Slow down and provide child with uninterrupted quality time.
- Be flexible. Watch for and respond to hunger cues, rather than working by the clock.
- Never 'prop-up' an infant with a bottle that does not have the acquired motor skills to feed themselves. Rather, nurse infant; hold in a slight incline. With close supervision and support AND after consultation with child's parents/guardians, a child who has the acquired motor skills, may bottle feed themselves.
- Promptly remove bottles from children when they have finished drinking. Do not store leftovers for later.

Cooking experiences and the use of food in play

Teachers and educators will:

- Wash and dry hands before cooking.
- Support children to wash and dry their hands before cooking.
- Tie back long hair before cooking with children.
- Support children to tie back their long hair before cooking.
- Where possible, choose experiences where food is cooked, as germs are destroyed in the cooking process. The risk of uncooked foods is minimised if children prepare food they will eat themselves e.g. fruit salad cups or sandwiches.
- Never use eggs collected from centre or family-owned chickens. Use shop bought eggs, within expiry date.
- Never implement cooking experiences during (and 48hrs after) an outbreak of an infectious illness within the centre.
- Children who have had diarrhoea or vomiting may return to the service if they have not had these symptoms for at least 24 hours but should not participate in any cooking activities until they are symptom-free for at least 48 hours. Check with local public health unit before resuming cooking activities.

- It is unlikely that blowing out birthday candles will spread disease, unless the child has recently been sick. However, risk minimisation options for this activity could be to use separate cupcakes or birthday 'claps' rather than blowing out the candles.
- Consider sensory play alternatives instead of using food products in play. Discuss as a team and make decisions to meet the current needs of children.
- Consider possible cultural, participation rights and ethical issues of using food in play. Consult with families to determine whether using food products in play is appropriate and respectful.

Key references

- [Food Safety Information Council](#). [accessed 14 May 2024]
- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#). [accessed 14 May 2024]
- [Get Up and Grow; Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#). [accessed 14 May 2024]
- [Staying healthy guidelines | NHMRC](#) (6th Edition). [accessed 21 August 2024]
- [Nutrition Australia Qld | Food Foundations](#). [accessed 21 August 2024]