

# Nutrition, Food and Beverages, Dietary Requirements Policy and Procedure

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## Introduction

This policy concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in care and the promotion of normal growth and development.

Learning Links Preschool is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in Munch & Move and to supporting the National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings as outlined in the Get Up & Grow resources.

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

Our service also 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.

Learning Links Preschool encourages and supports all families to breastfeed, in line with current health recommendations.

This policy outlines how Learning Links Preschool supports the development and wellbeing of children in our care.

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## Policy

- Learning Links assumes a proactive role in supporting families and providing them with current information and resources to allow them to manage healthy eating and encourage sound nutritional practice/s within their home.
  - Learning Links Preschool believes that good nutrition is essential for each child's healthy growth and development. For this reason, the service will provide quality food experiences as part of the curriculum that are nutritious and consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Young People in Australia to:
    - promote health and wellbeing
    - reduce the risk of diet-related conditions
    - reduce the risk of chronic disease.
  - All food served at the Preschool will be consistent with children's individual dietary requirements and take into consideration the children's likes and dislikes as well as meet any cultural requirements of families in accord with the Early Years Learning Framework.
  - We provide a relaxed and enjoyable environment for children to eat their meals and snacks.
  - Preschool staff will maintain high standards of hygiene throughout all food preparation.
  - Educators will encourage the development of children's good eating habits through modelling and reinforcing healthy eating and nutrition practices.
  - The Preschool will encourage families to share recipes and traditions to enrich the variety and enjoyment of food by the children and to support the children's development of respect for and understanding of diversity.
  - The Munch & Move Program key messages will be embedded in service delivery:
    - Encourage and support breastfeeding
    - Choose water as a drink
    - Choose healthier snacks
    - Eat more fruit and vegetables
    - Get active each day
    - Turn off the TV or computer and get active.
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**Eligibility**

This policy applies to all Learning Links Preschool staff and staff involved in the delivery of services to children. The term staff applies to employees, students and volunteers.

**Responsible**

<b>Person</b>	<b>Responsible for</b>
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011.</li> <li>• Allocate finances for training and food safety.</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>
Preschool Manager / Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Ensure that, where food and beverages are supplied by the service, they are:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ nutritious and adequate in quantity</li> <li>○ chosen with regard to the dietary requirements of individual children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhere to the strategies and practices of the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Policy.</li> <li>• Ensure children's individual dietary needs are adhered to.</li> <li>• Provide positive mealtime experiences for children.</li> <li>• Respect the individual needs and choices of children.</li> <li>• Actively supervise children during mealtimes.</li> <li>• Adhere to the services Hygiene Policy.</li> </ul>
Parents / Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences.</li> <li>• Provide children with access to nutritious food and water.</li> <li>• Not provide sugary foods and drinks for their children to have while in the care of the service.</li> </ul>

## Related documents

### Related Legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 78-80
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011

### Related Guidelines, Standards and Frameworks:

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice – Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety – Standards 2.1, 2.2
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment – Standards 3.1, 3.2
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements – Standards 4.1, 4.2
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children – Standards 5.1, 5.2
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities – Standards 6.1, 6.2
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership – Standards 7.1, 7.1.2

### Sources:

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Healthy Kids NSW – [www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)
- Nutrition Australia – [www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand – [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)

## Promoting healthy food and drinks

Learning Links will promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents by:

- Providing information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and suitable for children’s lunchboxes.
- Advising families to pack milk or water as suitable beverages. Juice, cordial, soft drinks or sports drinks are unsuitable.
- Encouraging families to pack both fruit and vegetables in their child’s lunch box.
- Encouraging 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.
- Discouraging 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.
- Supporting families in situations where they provide unsuitable food by:
  - A sensitive approach will be taken by educators. Cultural issues, individual family practices, lifestyles and preferences need to be listened to.
  - Removing emphasis from the child. Children will not be placed under duress by having foods removed. Rather, staff will maintain a family focus and share information with the family regarding the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Guidelines Policy and procedures and best practice in promoting healthy eating and nutrition.
  - Explaining to the parent that the children eat meals in a social environment at Preschool. In this context there is potential for disruption, inequity and confusion that unsuitable foods can create amongst the children in the group.

## Inclusion of children with special diets

Some children at Preschool may need to follow a special diet:

- Diets are prescribed by a doctor, dietician or therapist for a specific condition.
- Children with food allergies and intolerances may also require a special diet. Refer to Medical Conditions Policy and Procedure for more information.

- Where a child requires a special diet, relevant information from the child's doctor, paediatrician, dietician or therapist must be provided to the service.
  - Families of children with special diets may bring in separate celebration foods (containing no allergens) so that their child can participate in celebrations which may involve food e.g. birthdays.
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**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.
- 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**

- Encourage and provide opportunities for 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 i.e. 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.
- Food-handling staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the staff.

**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, educators 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.

### Support and encourage breastfeeding

- Learning Links Preschool encourages and supports all families to breastfeed, in line with current health recommendations. Our service recognises that families have the right to decide whether they will breastfeed, and each family's decision will be accepted and respected. Our service will provide a supportive environment by providing suitable spaces and resources to mothers breastfeeding their infants at the service.

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

- Provide a copy of 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.

### Document control

This table outlines the control details for this document.

Element	Details
Document Name	Nutrition, Food and Beverages, Dietary Requirements Policy and Procedure
Document Owner	Melissa Murphy
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Effective Date	11 August 2020
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