

# NUTRITION & FOOD SAFETY POLICY

Montessori Children’s Centre- Seacliff is a lunch box Centre. Families provide children with their morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. Children engage in a variety of cooking experiences whilst at the centre.

Our Service recognises the importance of safe food handling and healthy eating to promote the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating. Our Service therefore recognises the importance of supporting families to provide healthy food and drink to their children.

We are committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. We support and utilise the Australian Government’s *Get Up & Grow-Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* and *Eat for Health* resources.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

| QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY |                                 |   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| 2.1  | Health                          | Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.                        |
| 2.1.2  | Health practices and procedures | Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented. |
| 2.1.3  | Healthy lifestyles              | Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.           |

| EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS |  |
|--|--|
| 77   | Health, hygiene and safe food practices                      |
| 78   | Food and beverages   |
| 79   | Service providing food and beverages                         |
| 80   | Weekly menu  |
| 90   | Medical conditions policy                                    |
| 91   | Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents          |
| 162  | Health information to be kept in enrolment record            |
| 168  | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |

## RELATED POLICIES

|                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Food, Hygiene and Infection | Dental Care |
|-----------------------------|-------------|

**PURPOSE**

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) Services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that our Service partners with families to provide education about nutrition and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with chronic adult conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Our Service recognises the importance of healthy eating for the growth, development, and wellbeing of young children and is committed to promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices for children in our care. This policy affirms our position on the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in our care and the promotion and education of healthy choices for optimum nutrition.

We believe in providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to children, families, staff, visitors, and management of the Service.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Our Service has a responsibility to help children to develop good food practices and approaches, by working with families and educators.

Any food prepared by the Service or families will endeavour to be consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and provide children with 50% of the recommended dietary intake for all nutrients. Food will be served at various times throughout the day to cater for all children’s nutritional needs.

Mealtimes reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where educators engage in meaningful conversations with children. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Program.

**NUTRITION**

Our Service will:

- Provide a suitable place within the Service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk.

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

Our Service will:

*Where food is brought from home:*

- Provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and that are suitable for children's lunchboxes.
- 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/or sugar, and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, some muesli bars, breakfast bars and fruit filled bars, and chips.

MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/EDUCATORS WILL:

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- 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.
- Ensure all children are always supervised children whilst eating and drinking.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Display nutritional information for families and keep them regularly updated.
- Ensure age and developmentally appropriately utensils and furniture is provided for each child.
- Not allow food to be used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe.
- Not allow the children to be force fed or being required to eat food they do not like or more than they want to eat.
- Encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at meal times.

- Establish healthy eating habits in the children by incorporating nutritional information into our program.
- Talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating.
- Encourage parents to the best of our ability to continue our healthy eating message in their homes.

## FOOD HYGIENE

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov, 2019).

Our Service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

### *Storing and preparing food:*

Our Service will:

- Ensure the refrigerator and freezer has a thermometer and that the refrigerator is maintained at 5 °C or below and the freezer is maintained at -17 °C or below.
- Store cleaning supplies separate to food items.
- Ensure that all cooked food is cooked through and reaches 60 °C.
- Ensure that cooked food is served promptly, or
- Use a thermometer to ensure that hot food is maintained at above 60 °C until ready to serve.
- Ensure that prepared cold food is stored in the refrigerator maintained at below 5 °C until ready to serve.
- Discard any cooked food that has been left in the 'danger zone' for two or more hours. Do not reheat.
- Reheat cooked food (if required, for example for a child who was sleeping at lunch time) to a temperature of 70 °C (but only ever reheat once. Discard if the food is not eaten after being reheated).
- Ensure that gloves are changed between handling different foods or changing tasks.
- Ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels.
- Ensure that unwell staff do not handle food.

### *Cleaning:*

Our Service will:

- Ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation.
- Ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitised before use.
- Ensure that all dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and allowed to air dry
- Ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight.
- Ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair.
- Prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently.
- Ensure that floor mops are thoroughly cleaned and air dried after each use.
- Replace any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling.

***Personal hygiene for food handlers:***

Our Service will ensure:

- Strict hand-washing hygiene is adhered to, including washing hands each time they return to the kitchen before continuing with food preparation duties.
- Wounds or cuts are covered with a brightly coloured, waterproof dressing (that will easily be seen if it falls off), and gloves will be worn over any dressings.
- Staff who are not well will not prepare or handle food.

**All staff handling food will:**

- Ensure gloves (or food tongs) are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures (below 5°C or above 60°C), with consideration to the safe eating temperature requirements of children.
- Ensure separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken, fruit and vegetables, and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.

**Creating a positive learning environment**

Our Service will:

- 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.

- Choose water as a preferred drink.
- 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 older toddlers and pre-schoolers 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.
- Not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.
- Role-model and discuss safe food handling with children.

### *Service Program*

Our Service will:

- 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.
- Embed the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in everyday activities and experiences.

### *Cooking with children*

Cooking experiences may sometimes be carried out with the children as a part of the program. On these occasions participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

### *Communicating with families*

Our Service will:

- Provide opportunities for families to contribute to the review and development of this 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 factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

**Source**

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).  
 Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. (2009).  
*Food Act 2003*  
*Food Regulation 2015*  
 Foodsafety.gov. (2019): <https://www.foodsafety.gov>  
 Food Safety Standards (Australia only). (2015): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/safetystandards/Pages/default.aspx>  
*Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991*  
 Food Standards Australia New Zealand. (2016). Safe Food Australia – A guide to the food safety standard (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Pages/safefoodaustralia3rd16.aspx>  
 Food Standards Australia New Zealand: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>  
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).  
 Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2017).  
 National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-dietary-guidelines>  
 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).  
 The Australian Dental Association: <https://www.ada.org.au/Home>  
 The Department of Health. Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood – Staff/Carers Book: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-staffcarers>  
*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.

**REVIEW**

|                        |   |                         |                     |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>POLICY REVIEWED</b> | <b>JANUARY 2022</b>   | <b>NEXT REVIEW DATE</b> | <b>JANUARY 2022</b> |
| <b>MODIFICATIONS</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renamed policy.</li> <li>• Changed formatting</li> </ul> |                         |                     |