

09 Standard Childcare Practice

09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager e.g., picnic on a blanket.
- Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water. Please note during an epidemic, pandemic etc. children will use their own drinks bottle to lower the risk of cross contamination.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually move to semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, as long as they are eating a varied and balanced diet.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Biscuits should not be offered, but toast, rice cakes or oatcakes are good alternatives.
- Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough. Children are not made to leave their play if they do not want to have a snack.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.
- During epidemics and Pandemics etc., children will not share food from a communal plate but instead bring in their own snack from home in a named plastic container, they will need two snack boxes if they are staying all day.

Mealtimes

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.
- Tables are cleaned before and after lunch.
- Children wash their hands and sit down with their lunch boxes.
- Children are encouraged to eat the savoury part of their lunch first.
- Staff have their lunch with children. Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.

- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. Please note children will be encouraged to try new foods, but staff must be informed if a parent is trying something new in their child's lunchbox as we will expect your child to try everything in their lunch box.
- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
- After lunch children are encouraged to pack away their lunch boxes and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
- Children wash their hands after lunch.
- When we restart the cleaning teeth program this will be done no sooner than 1 hour after lunch (see procedure 04.6 Oral health).
- Information for parents is displayed on our website and sent via Parentmail, including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
 - When baking - identification of any foods containing allergens will also be emailed via Parentmail.