

3.5. Food, Drink and Healthy Eating



Policy statement

We encourage children to develop a positive attitude to food and healthy lifestyles. This is achieved through adopting a whole setting approach which encompasses children, their families and staff. We regard snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults, and helps children to learn about healthy eating. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

This policy recognises that children under the age of 5 years have different nutritional needs to those of older children and adults. They have a high energy and nutrient requirement in relation to their size. Healthy eating messages aimed at adults are not wholly appropriate for children in early years. Early years is an important time to shape food preferences and habits, by allowing children to make their own selections through guided choice, this can have a positive impact on health in later life. This policy covers general nutrition guidance; children have individual needs which should be acknowledged. If parents/carers have any concerns they should discuss these with their Health visitor, GP or a dietitian.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.)
 - We record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration Form and parents sign the form to signify that it is correct.
 - We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
 - We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all our staff are fully informed about them.
 - We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as their parents' wishes.
 - We give parents our 3-week menus before their child attends nursery. In addition, we display the menus in the nursery, for them to view.
 - We provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
 - We include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - meat, fish and protein alternatives
 - dairy foods
 - grains, cereals and starch vegetables
 - fruit and vegetables
 - We include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
 - We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and we are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.

- Through discussion with parents and research reading, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We provide a vegetarian/vegan alternative on days when meat or fish are offered and make every effort to ensure Halal meat or Kosher food is available for children who require it.
- We show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. We do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For young children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised milk. Although we slowly introduce semi-skimmed milk from the age of two years; firstly into meals and dishes, such as on cereal or in white sauces, before offering it as a drink, so that the transition is gradual.
- For each child, we provide parents with online daily diary about their child's feeding routines and intake through our EyLog app.
- Fussy eaters will be encouraged (but not forced) to eat. Praise will be given when the child eats, food will be removed without judgement if the child refuses food.
- If a child refuses the main course, a portion of dessert will still be offered. Children will be given as much time as they need to finish meals.

Packed lunches

We do not encourage packed lunches, however in exceptional circumstances this will be allowed. If parents provide packed lunches or other foods from home, the nursery will:

- ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are refrigerated or contain an ice pack to keep food cool;
- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating;
- inform parents of whether we have facilities to microwave cooked food brought from home;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk-based deserts, such as yoghurt or fromage frais, where we can only provide cold food from home. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort;
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and

Celebrations and rewards

- Children will be rewarded without the use of confectionary or other foods e.g. praising children, stickers, reward charts, certificates, etc.
- The setting will encourage staff to be innovative in the way birthdays and festivals are celebrated e.g. without the use of foods high in added sugar and salt
- Parents/carers are welcomed to bring **NUT FREE** birthday cake and any nut free party treats. Parents must take into account possible allergies/special diets of other children. A piece of the birthday cake and any party treats will be sent home with each child at the end of the day so parents/carers can decide whether their child will have these or not.
- Parents/carers will be consulted over appropriate ways to celebrate ethnic/cultural and religious occasions.

Please be aware that due to the allergies to nuts being common and the results severe, the Nursery is a strict nut free zone and children will never be given nuts or anything that may contain nut products. Parents/carers are asked to respect this and ensure they do not bring/allow their children to come into Nursery, with anything that may contain nuts.

Bottle feeding

All babies have individual bottle-feeding schedules. The pattern established at home will be adopted within the nursery. The nursery supports all mothers who wish to continue breastfeeding their babies and we will provide private facilities for these Parents.

Bottle feeding babies:

- Babies must be supervised at all times when they are feeding.
- Bottles should only be prepared in the kitchen.
- Bottles need to be kept in the fridge in the kitchen.
- Staff should check the details of the child whose bottle is being made.
- Bottles are to be labelled individually.
- Bottles should be sterilised before they are made following the instructions displayed in the kitchen.
- Bottles should be made in accordance with the guidance provided with the formula.
- Staff must wear aprons when preparing bottles and wash their hands before and after.
- Once bottles are cool, they need to be put into the fridge until they are needed.
- Bottles will never be reheated in a microwave oven. Bottles, which need to be warmed, will be reheated in jugs of hot water, which are to be kept in the kitchen and must not be taken out of this area.
- Practitioners need to test that the milk is not too hot before they give it to the child.
- A feeding bottle will always be covered for periods when the child is being winded or is resting.
- Do not give child another child's milk. If this happens, inform a senior member of staff immediately and the parent when appropriate.
- Any unused milk needs to be disposed of immediately. Once reheated milk can only be kept for one hour.
- Unused bottles of milk are not to be kept longer than 2 hours.
- Bottles should be washed in the milk kitchen. There is a bottlebrush, which needs to be used to do this.

- Bottles need to be placed in the steriliser at the end of the day.

Following advice from the National health service breast milk can be stored in a fridge for up to 24 hours providing that the temperature of the fridge remains between 2 and 4°C, which practitioners will check daily. Parents should advise staff of when the milk was expressed to ensure milk is not stored for longer than this. Staff must label each bottle with the date and time the milk must be disposed of if not already done by the parent.

If parents wish we will keep a store of frozen breast milk on the premises for their child's use. Frozen breast milk can be stored for up to two weeks in an ice compartment as long as it has been dated before being brought to nursery, once defrosted it needs to be used or disposed of within the 24-hour limit.

Weaning

Government guidelines state that babies should not be weaned onto solid food until they are at least six months old. If, however, you choose to do this earlier we encourage you to discuss this with your child's health visitor/GP first. Babies should be given new foods at home before they are given to them at nursery in case of any allergic reactions. Please discuss your child's diet with their key person or senior member of staff in the room and keep them up to date regularly.

To avoid any possible allergic reaction, babies under six months should not be given the following unless otherwise requested by parents in writing so that a copy can be kept in their personal file.

- Cows Milk
- Berries
- Honey
- Egg
- Sea food e.g. prawns

We embrace parent's wishes when using the "child led weaning" approach and continue this while their child is with us. We work alongside parents who must keep us up to date and informed of any changes.

Most babies, by the age of 6 months are ready to start and add solid food to add bulk to their diet, as they need more iron and nutrients than milk alone can provide. We may suggest to parents if we feel baby is not satisfied with just milk and encourage introducing a varied diet, following government health guidelines – health education authority, taking advice from what the baby's health visitor has suggested and ideas from weaning leaflets.

Starting Weaning

Food is normally bland to start with, usually baby rice mixed with breast or formula milk which is introduced in very small 'taster' amounts, using sterilised utensils. Milk is still their main source of nutrition. We will then start and offer pureed vegetables / fruit, introducing different food every couple of weeks in the beginning.

Cooked vegetables include:		Fruits includes:
Carrots	Sprouts	Avocado
Pumpkin	Sweet potato	Banana
Swede	Green beans	Cooked apples
Cauliflower	Broccoli	Pear
Butternut Squash	Parsnips	Peaches

Once fruit and vegetable have been established in the diet, full fat cow's milk products can be introduced e.g. yoghurt, custard, cheese sauce. Alongside fruit we will offer rice pudding and semolina

All food is prepared on the premises and is low in sugar and salt.

We recognise that all children are individuals, some start introducing solid food earlier, others later, some are choosy, and others like everything and anything. Solid food is offered at lunchtime, with children relaxed on a knee, or in a cradle chair eventually moving into a chair which is around the table with their peers. Cooled boiled water is given in sterilised beaker cup / bottle. The sterilization of all equipment used to feed babies less than one year is vital to their health. Tiddley Tots manages and implements this practice.

We aim to work with parents offering similar foods, portions, and time of day to establish weaning. Gradually offering a variety of food and introducing a pattern / routine of three meals a day (two with us here – if full day) with a drink at each mealtime then eventually having additional snacks, offering a wide variety of foods. As baby eats more solid food, his or her milk intake will start to decrease.

6 – 9 Months

We will introduce most of the new food such as pasta, bread, fish etc. Our aim is by the time the child is 6 months the baby will be eating food from the general nursery menu and can experience even more tastes. We will then make the food a little more textured / lumpier which helps learning to chew. Initially using a handheld blender to puree food, then slightly blending, mashing by hand. Finger foods will be offered, to promote chewing, such as toast, bread, breadsticks, pitta bread, pieces of banana etc. It is vitally important to develop this action as chewing helps develop jaw muscles. These are then used to help pronunciation and the formation of sounds and words. Once children can manage finger foods, we will reduce the type of pureed food offered at teatime.

9 – 12 Months

Babies are given one or two spoons to help assist in self-help skills as they try to feed them-selves. The baby is now usually ready to sit at the table, so it becomes more of a social occasion for everyone. By 12 months we are trying to discourage bottles and start to solely use a beaker cup. We find by that time that many children are ready to begin or have already weaned themselves off the bottle. We also encourage children to have full fat cow's milk (or an alternative if the child cannot have cow's milk) as their main drink, after their first birthday.

We work very closely with parents' wishes and children will move on to the complete nursery menu as and when they are ready. Children have a savoury meal and pudding with a drink at lunchtime. They will then have milk in the afternoon. For tea they will have finger food / a savoury meal, followed by fresh fruit. A healthy snack in the evening is provided, so the children can have their main meal / tea or supper with their family.