

Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy

Quick reference: nutrition | dietary requirements | weekly menu | medical conditions | allergies | food intolerances | cultural food practices | religious dietary restrictions | risk minimisation | menu display | safe drinking water | health and hygiene | food preparation | dietary management | healthy eating | child development | individual needs | family consultation | food safety standards | special dietary needs | allergy aware

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

- (1) To set out how we ensure children are offered food and drinks that are appropriate to their needs while they are in our care
- (2) This policy is a requirement under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. The approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for health and safety matters in relation to nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements (s 168)
- (3) This policy helps us to comply with the specific obligations regarding food and beverages we have under the *National Regulations* (ss 77-80) and the National Quality Standard

SCOPE

- (4) This policy applies to:
 - ‘Staff’: the approved provider, paid workers, volunteers, work placement students, and third parties (e.g., contractors, subcontractors, self-employed persons, employees of a labour hire company) at our service who carry out work that is relevant to this policy
 - Children in our care, their parents, families and care providers
 - **<Board/committee members> [delete if not applicable]**
- (5) Food safety is covered in our Food Safety Policy and Procedures

DEFINITIONS

- (6) The following definitions apply to this policy and related procedures:
 - ‘Dietary requirements’ specific food and beverage needs based on each child’s growth, development, cultural, religious and health needs
 - ‘Food safety’ means practices for food handling that ensure food is safe and suitable to consume. Food safety is covered extensively in our Food Safety Policy and Procedures

- ‘Medical management plans’, ‘risk management plans’, and ‘communication plans’ are required for children who have a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition – see our [Medical Conditions Policy](#)

POLICY STATEMENT

Meeting children’s individual dietary requirements

- (7) The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that educators offer children food and beverages that are appropriate to their needs at regular times throughout the day (*National Regulations s 78*)
- (8) Children at our service bring their own food and drinks from home, but we have routine mealtimes and snack times, and provide fresh and safe drinking water. Children are allowed to eat outside of our routine eating times if required.
- (9) Staff must follow our [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure](#) to ensure all children’s nutrition and dietary requirements are identified and catered to

Identifying children’s dietary requirements

- (10) At the time of a child’s enrolment, we must collect information about their daily dietary needs, including their:
 - Growth and developmental needs
 - Cultural or religious food practices
 - Health and medical needs, including dietary restrictions, allergies and risk of anaphylaxis
- (11) Up-to-date health information must be recorded in children’s enrolment record (*National Regulations s 162*); and, where relevant, in a child’s medical management plan, risk-minimisation plan and communication plan (*National Regulations s 90*)
- (12) We must consult with families about their child’s dietary needs during our routine check-ins, and send reminders to parents to update us in writing if there are any changes
- (13) Room leaders and the nominated supervisor must ensure that educators and other relevant staff members are aware of each child’s current dietary requirements. This will be achieved through regular formal and informal communication (e.g., written instruction, at induction and orientation, during staff/room briefings etc)
- (14) If there are concerns about a child’s food intake, educators and the parents should discuss the matter in an open and respectful manner

Food and drinks from home

Healthy lunchboxes

- (15) Families are encouraged to provide a healthy lunchbox for their child (labelled with their name), that includes:
- A bottle of water
 - Adequate amounts of food and drinks from the five food groups with a variety of tastes, colours textures, and flavours
- (16) Parents should avoid packing sugary drinks, confectionery, deep fried food or food containing nuts

Supporting parents

- (17) If a child is often bringing food or drinks from home that do not fit into our approach to nutrition, educators must:
- Discuss this with their parents in a respectful manner. They must not shame parents or refuse to allow the child to consume the food or drink
 - Provide parents with resources and support
- (18) If a child does not bring sufficient food from home, educators must:
- Contact their parents
 - Prepare a meal from our kitchen if their parents are unable to provide food that day and remind parents to pack their child's lunchbox the next day
 - Escalate ongoing concerns to the nominated supervisor, who can provide the family with support and referrals

Access to safe drinking water

- (19) The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that children have access to safe drinking water at all times (*National Regulations s 78*)
- (20) Educators must make fresh water available where children play, eat and rest and remind children to drink water throughout the day
- (21) Educators must keep water bottles belonging to children with a food allergy in a separate location from the other children's water bottle to reduce the chance of other children drinking from them

Food safety and medical requirements

- (22) If a child has a food-related medical condition or health need (e.g., allergy, diabetes, food intolerance etc), staff must follow our [Medical Conditions Policy](#), which sets out how to

implement medical management, risk management, and communication plans (*National Regulations s 90*)

- (23) If applicable, we must display a notice stating that a child who is at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service (*National Regulations s 173(f)(ii)*). The notice must be in a prominent position that is clearly visible from the main entrance, but must not identify the child
- (24) The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that all staff (including volunteers) follow our Food Safety Policy and Health, Hygiene and Cleaning Policy to maintain proper health, hygiene and food safety practices (*National Regulations s 77*)
- (25) We follow the best practice 'allergy aware' approach rather than banning allergenic foods (e.g., we are 'nut aware' rather than 'nut free'). This means we must implement risk management measures instead of outright bans (as detailed in our Food Safety Policy and Medical Conditions Policy)
- (26) All bottles, drinks and lunchboxes from home must be labelled with the child's name
- (27) Educators must incorporate oral/dental hygiene education in daily routines to promote good dental health among children and staff

Positive mealtimes

- (28) Educators must supervise children during mealtimes to ensure children's safety and wellbeing (see our serving food safely procedure in our Food Safety Policy)
- (29) Mealtimes should be used as a time to promote children's agency – children should be encouraged to make their own food choices, serve themselves where possible and be involved in mealtime set up and clean up
- (30) Children should be encouraged to eat independently (with consideration given to the child's age or developmental stage)
- (31) Furniture and equipment must be child-centred and suitable for the different ages and stages of our children
- (32) The eating area/s must be set up to encourage social interaction and a sense of belonging among the children. Educators should also interact with children and each other during mealtimes
- (33) Mealtimes should be relaxed, pleasant, and structured to meet most children's needs
- (34) Food must never be used as a punishment, reward or bribe
- (35) Educators must respect children's food choices and appetites, and never force children to eat or drink. Second helpings should be offered
- (36) Educators model and reinforce healthy and hygienic eating habits during mealtimes

Educational programming

- (37) Educators must plan and conduct lessons and activities that teach children about the benefits of healthy eating, oral/dental health and the different types of nutritious food
- (38) Food and mealtimes should be used as an opportunity for children to learn about their identity, relationships, their community, literacy, numeracy, science, and the world
- (39) We must regularly share with families information from recognised nutrition authorities about healthy eating and oral health
- (40) Food-related activities must be incorporated into our program to reinforce children's connection to food. These may include gardening, eating outside, and cooking

PRINCIPLES

- (41) We meet each child's dietary needs, and promote nutritious and appropriate food and beverages for good health, development, and well-being
- (42) We have an inclusive environment that meets children's cultural, religious, and health-based dietary requirements
- (43) We have an allergy-aware approach and implement strict food safety measures to ensure children are not at risk while they are in our care
- (44) We communicate respectfully and partner with families to encourage children's healthy eating. We consult with families regularly so we can cater to each child's dietary needs
- (45) Staff are given the skills and knowledge to promote and model healthy eating. Healthy eating and oral health are included in our educational programming and planning
- (46) We regularly review our policies and procedures so we can be sure we are implementing the current best practice for children's nutrition, dietary requirements and food safety
- (47) We help children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing, and we see mealtimes as an opportunity to encourage their sense of agency and social belonging

6. POLICY COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND MONITORING

- (48) This policy and related documents can be found on our website and in our front office.
- (49) The approved provider and nominated supervisor provide information, training and other resources and support regarding the [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#) and related documents
- (50) All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to review, understand and formally acknowledge this [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#) and related documents
- (51) The Nominated supervisor runs a professional development program for each staff member, which covers this policy
- (52) Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in this policy and in individual position descriptions. They are communicated during staff inductions and in ongoing training

- (53) The approved provider and nominated supervisor monitor and audit staff practices through supervision and regular performance appraisal and address non-compliance. Breaches to this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action against a staff member
- (54) At enrolment, families are given access to our Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related documents
- (55) Families are notified in line with our obligations under the *National Regulations* when changes are made to our policies and procedures

LEGISLATION (OVERVIEW)

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

s 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
s 73	Educational program
s 77	Health, safety and safe food practices
s 78	Food and beverages
s 79	Service providing food and beverages
ss 90 - 91	Medical conditions policy
s 162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
s 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
s 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
s 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
s 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
s 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
ss 181 ,183 - 184	Confidentiality and storage of records

Other applicable laws and regulations

<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>	Describes the primary duty of care to people in the workplace
<i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code</i>	Covers food safety requirements
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Principal act protecting the handling of personal information
<i>Food Act 1984 (VIC)</i> <i>Food Safety Regulations (VIC)</i>	Covers the safe handling of food, including the Australian Food Safety Code

National Quality Standard

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 lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazards
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service

My Time, Our Place (MTO) V2.0

3: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing • Children and young people become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing • Children and young people are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health, and personal safety
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National Principles for Safe Organisations

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Key Policies	Food Safety Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Health, Hygiene and Cleaning Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Physical Environment Policy Enrolment Policy Medical Conditions Policy Enrolment Policy Additional Needs Policy
Procedures	Roles and Responsibilities – Nutrition and Dietary Requirements (attached) Food Safety Procedures (in Food Safety Policy) Medical management plans (in Medical Conditions Policy) Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedures (in Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy)

SOURCES

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations | National Quality Standard | Australian Dietary Guidelines | Eat for Health – Australian Guide to Healthy Eating | Get Up & Grow – Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood | NHMRC’s Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers 2012 (current) | State/territory food legislation | Australian Breastfeeding Association | Best Practice Guidelines for Anaphylaxis Prevention and Management in Children’s Education and Care Services V2.1, 2023 | Victorian Department of Education’s Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard | Healthy Eating Advisory Service

POLICY INFORMATION

Approval Dina Kahn

Review Reviewed annually and when there are changes that may affect this policy or related procedures. The review will include checks to ensure the document reflects current legislation, continues to be effective, or whether any changes and additional training are required

Last reviewed: 25th March 2026 Date for next review: 25th March 2027

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Nutrition and Dietary Requirements

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, including to:

- Ensure that children have access to safe drinking water at all times
- Ensure that children are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day
- Display a notice about any anaphylaxis risks at the main entrance
- Ensure that the food and beverages we serve to children are nutritious and adequate in quantity and chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of each child, taking into account their growth and developmental needs, and any specific cultural, religious or health requirements
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Ensure that our service's management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for nutrition, and dietary and medical requirements are appropriate in practice, up-to-date, best practice, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidelines

Ensure this Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related procedures are in place and available for inspection

Take reasonable steps to ensure our Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

Regularly review this Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy and related procedures in consultation with children, families, communities and staff

Notify families at least 14 days before changing this Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy if the changes will: affect the fees charged or the way they are collected; or significantly impact the service's education and care of children; or significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, including to:

- Ensure that children have access to safe drinking water at all times
 - Ensure that children are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day
 - Display a notice about any anaphylaxis risks at the main entrance
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Support the approved provider to ensure that our service’s management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for nutrition, and dietary and medical requirements are appropriate in practice, up-to-date, best practice, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidelines

Implement this [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#) and related procedures

Take reasonable steps to ensure our [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#) and related procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

Record children’s dietary requirements at enrolment and keep the record updated with any new information or changes. Communicate any requirements to educators and other relevant staff members. Implement any medical management plans, risk management plans and communication plans as required

Enforce our ‘allergy aware’ approach according to this policy and procedure

Contribute to policies and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans in consultation with children, families, communities and staff. Support the approved provider to notify families of reviews and changes according to legislation and our policies and procedures

Follow this [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#) and related procedures (including for food safety and managing children’s medical conditions)

Undertake any relevant professional development to enhance your skills and knowledge in nutrition, food safety, and dietary and medical requirements

Model and teach children about healthy eating and oral health. Plan and conduct relevant activities in our educational program (e.g., cooking, gardening, discussions about food choices)

Make mealtimes a positive experience for children. Supervise and interact with children while they are eating, and encourage children’s independence and autonomy by allowing them to make their own decisions about food

Be aware of each child’s dietary needs or medical requirements, including risk of anaphylaxis. Room leaders must communicate this information regularly to educators/food handling staff and volunteers (e.g., through written records, and in team and staff meetings)

Maintain open and respectful communication with parents about their child’s nutrition, and any cultural, religious or health requirements. Report any concerns you have about a child’s food and beverage intake to their parents and the nominated supervisor. Provide families with information and resources about healthy eating and oral health

Follow our ‘allergy aware’ approach, according to this policy

Pack a healthy lunchbox for your child (see the guidelines set out in this [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#))

Label your child's Drinks and lunchboxes

Provide up to date information about your child's dietary requirements, including any cultural, religious, health or medical needs. If there are any changes, please advise us in writing as soon as possible

Follow our allergy-aware approach and avoid bringing in food containing peanuts or tree nuts

Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure

Introduction

- These procedures apply to our [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#)
- See also our [Medical Conditions Policy](#), [Food Safety Policy](#) and [Health, Hygiene and Cleaning](#) for related procedures
- 'Parents' includes guardians and persons who have parental responsibilities for the child under a decision or order of court
- 'Staff' includes volunteers, students and third parties defined in the scope of the [Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Policy](#)

Procedure

When to use this procedure

- When you are collecting, communicating and managing children's dietary and health needs, including allergies
- When you are supporting families to provide healthy food and drinks for their child
- During mealtimes and snacks
- For food-related educational planning and programming

1. Identify and communicate the nutrition and dietary needs of each child

- Collect information about each child at enrolment, including:
 - Food allergies, intolerances or medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, coeliac disease, anaphylaxis)
 - Cultural and religious food practices (e.g., vegetarian, halal, fasting periods)
 - Individual food and drink preferences
 - Any food or drinks the child must avoid
- Record the child's dietary information in the child's enrolment record and the dietary information list
- Display the dietary information list in the room, staff room and kitchen spaces
- If a child has a medical dietary requirement, the nominated supervisor must ensure that their management plans (medical management, risk minimisation,

communication) are kept up-to-date, and communicated and available to staff, in line with our [Medical Conditions Policy](#)

- If applicable, the nominated supervisor must put up a notice to alert everyone at the service that child who has been diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service:
 - Put the notice up in a prominent spot, visible at the entrance
 - Do not identify the child/ren in the notice
- Ask families to review and update the dietary information at least once a year and immediately in writing if their child's needs change
- The nominated supervisor and room leaders must update the records and tell the other staff about the changes

2. Plan and display our weekly menu for services that provide food

- Develop the weekly menu based on our policies, recognised nutritional guidelines, the growth and development needs of the children, dietary requirements and food allergies, and the cultural and religious food preferences of families
- Display the weekly menu in a prominent spot at the main entrance (this is a legal requirement). It must accurately state all the meals and snacks that will be provided each day
- Prepare and serve meals as per the approved menu. If there is a last-minute change the nominated supervisor or another staff member must put a note on our menu board as soon as possible or tell families electronically
- If you are handling food, you must follow our [Food Safety Policy](#)
- Regularly review the menu to make sure it is still nutritionally balanced. Ask for feedback from staff, children and families and adjust the menu according to the season

3. Encourage families to pack healthy lunchboxes

- Give families guidance on packing healthy lunchboxes at enrolment, at the beginning of each year and regularly throughout the year via our usual communication methods
- Lunchboxes should include:
 - A bottle of water
 - A variety of food from the five food groups
 - 'sometimes' food
- Families should avoid packing any food containing nuts, sugary drinks, confectionary, deep fried food

- All food and drink containers must be labelled with the child's name
- If a child often brings food or drinks that don't match our guidelines:
 - Discuss the issue with the parent in a non-judgemental, respectful way
 - Offer the family resources and information on healthy lunchboxes
 - Do not shame parents or children, or refuse the child's meal
- If a child does not have enough food in their lunch box:
 - Call the parents to discuss the situation. It may be possible for them to drop by with more food
 - Give the child a meal from our kitchen if the parents can't provide food that day
 - Remind the parents to bring sufficient food in the future
 - Report to the nominated supervisor if it happens regularly. The nominated supervisor should provide support and referrals to the family as needed

4. Make sure children have access to safe drinking water

- Place water dispensers, bubblers or water bottles in areas where children play, eat and rest
- Routinely check that water containers are filled, clean and sanitised, especially after meals and snacks
- Remind children to drink water throughout the day, especially on hot days or after physical activity
- Keep water bottles belonging to children with a food allergy in a separate location from the other children's water bottle (e.g., in an open shelf with the child's backpack) to reduce the chance of other children drinking from them

5. Implement our 'allergy aware' approach to manage and prevent anaphylaxis

- We do not ban nuts or other allergen foods as doing so can give staff and families a false sense of security
- Follow the safety measures and regulations (detailed in our [Food Safety Policy](#) and [Medical Conditions Policy](#)) so that children are not put at risk. These include:
 - Knowing which children are at risk of anaphylaxis
 - Knowing what allergies need to be managed in our service
 - Having medical management plans, risk management and communication plans in place (for on-site and off-site activities)

- Taking precautions when storing, handling and serving food and drinks to prevent cross-contamination with allergens – including training in food handling for staff, volunteers and students
- Having staff on-site or on excursions who have completed anaphylaxis training and know how to administer adrenaline injector devices
- Informing families and visitors about how we manage allergies, especially for any activities that involve food
- Teaching children about allergies and the importance of washing their hands before and after eating, and not sharing food and drinks with each other
- Not serving nuts or peanuts to children as these are not staple foods
- If a child has a reaction to a food while they are in our care, follow medical management plans, your first aid training and our first aid procedure

6. Manage other food-related risks

- Sit with children during mealtimes and actively supervise them
- Be aware of choking hazards:
 - Modify food textures where required (e.g., grating, finely slicing, cooking, or mashing firm foods)
- Respond to any choking incidents according to your first aid training and our procedures
- If you are handling food, follow our Food Safety Policy and Procedures and Health, Hygiene and Cleaning Policy and Procedures to keep food free from contamination
- Ensure children and staff practice hand hygiene before and after eating
- Check that all bottles, drinks and lunchboxes from home are labelled with the child's name. Check labels before serving to children to prevent mix-ups

7. Make mealtimes a positive experience

- Create a calm, unhurried, relaxed environment for the children:
 - Arrange the tables and seating to encourage social interactions
 - Sit, eat and talk with the children
 - Encourage children to eat at their own pace and not to rush
 - Be positive about the healthy foods the children are eating
 - Model healthy and hygienic eating habits and good table manners during the meal
- Let children choose what and how much to eat:

- Don't ever force a child to eat or drink if they don't want and offer second helpings
- If a child refuses food, educators should not pressure them but may encourage tasting
- Never use food as punishment, reward or bribe
- Encourage children's autonomy and independence:
 - Make sure that tables, chairs, utensils and serving ware are developmentally appropriate for each child
 - Encourage children to help set the table, serve their own food and drinks (where appropriate), find their own place to sit and process communal and individual food waste
 - Encourage children to eat independently to develop their autonomy, and their fine motor, language and social skills

8. Promote healthy eating and oral gum health

- Have discussions with children about food and nutrition during your daily routines – talk about where food comes from, different cultures, and making good food and drink choices to keep your teeth and body healthy
- Plan and conduct lessons about food and nutrition and oral health
- Include food-related activities in our program (e.g., gardening, cooking, alfresco dining or picnics, excursions to community gardens, farms, markets)
- Use food to develop children's skills and knowledge of the world. For example, counting fruit, reading recipes, weighing ingredients, baking, gardening, and exposure to diverse cultural foods are great ways to indirectly to teach children literacy, numeracy, chemistry, biology, geography, and social sciences)
- Share information with families through newsletters, posters, email, social media etc
- Encourage families to share their cultural food traditions and recipes with us, and share your own
- Encourage children to drink water throughout the day to support dental health. Teach them to rinse their mouth with water to remove food debris (under an adult's supervision)
- Emphasise the importance of brushing your teeth and gums, eating a wide variety of healthy foods, limiting sugary drinks and food, and having regular check-ups with a dentist



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