



Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure

Policy

The Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure falls under the Health and Safety Policy. Hawthorn Early Years recognises that all children have the right to high quality education and care in a safe and comfortable environment. The Service has robust procedures to minimise and manage illness and injuries and ensure a safe and healthy environment.

Application of Procedure

This procedure applies to the Approved Provider, the Board of Hawthorn Early Years all subcommittees of the Board of Management, employees, students, volunteers, families, children and others attending the programs and activities of Hawthorn Early Years.

Hawthorn Early Years is committed to:

Supporting children aged 0-6 years to form healthy eating habits as we recognise that the early years are a critical time for the establishment of positive eating habits which promote healthy growth and development of children.

Working in partnership with parents and families to encourage healthy eating behaviour's in children whilst respecting family's cultural beliefs when planning, preparing and serving food.

Facilitating positive meal times, which promote connection to each other, community, and to provide opportunities for wonderful aesthetic and powerful learning experiences for young children including the development of language, social skills and self-help skills.

Promoting children's health and wellbeing by providing good nutrition and endorsing a healthy lifestyle, which works in accordance with the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Australian Dietary Guidelines to promote lifelong learning for children.

Hawthorn Early Years will:

Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods.

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

Support mothers to continue breastfeeding until babies are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 months of age.



In consultation with families, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink for babies under 12 months of age.

Always hold a baby (0-12months) in a semi-upright position when bottle-feeding.

Always supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle-feeding and eating practices at all times.

Ensure appropriate foods (type and texture) are available for babies once they are around 6 months of age or have started eating solid foods, keeping in mind that no food will be introduced to a baby if that same food type has not been introduced at home first.

Adjust the texture of foods offered between 6 and 12 months of age to match the baby's developmental stage. This means that the pureeing or mashing of food will be phased out and babies will be encouraged to feed themselves finger foods or whole foods once they are developmentally ready.

Offer a variety of foods to babies from all the food groups and ensure babies are fed individually by employees if they are unable to feed themselves.

Ensure the safe handling of breast milk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.

Support the transition from bottle feeding to drinking milk from a cup when babies are developmentally ready which is usually around 12 months of age. At this age young children's milk requirements reduce to 2 cups of milk per day. This process will be done in consultation with families.

Strategies for Handling Formula

It is not safe for parents to bring prepared infant formula for their child. This is because of the small risk of bacteria not killed during the formula preparation process growing in the bottle after it has been prepared. For this reason the below strategies are adopted:

Parents are required to provide pre-measured powdered formula for each bottle that the baby needs.

Parents are required to bring bottles and teats that are already sterilised and bottles filled with the correct amount of pre-boiled, cooled water so that the pre-measured amount formula can be added to the bottles when needed. A separate bottle is required for each feed the baby requires whilst at the Service.

All bottles, formula and feeding equipment must be CLEARLY NAMED.

Note: The Service provides cow's milk and soymilk but these products will not be used as a main drink for children under 12 months of age.



Strategies for Handling Breastmilk

Parents must bring expressed breast milk in a named and dated bottle and this must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer. Any unused breast milk will be discarded.

Strategies for Heating Bottles

Heat bottles once only. Do not allow a bottle to cool and then reheat it—this can allow germs to grow. Do not warm bottles in the microwave. Microwave ovens distribute heat unevenly. Water in the milk can turn to steam that collects at the top of the bottle, and there is a danger that the infant could be scalded. Many parents use microwaves to warm bottles at home. In the home environment, usually only one or two people are preparing bottles, using the same type of bottle and the same microwave every time, so the risk of overheating the milk and scalding the infant is lower.

To heat bottles:

- Stand the bottle in a bottle warmer for no more than 15 minutes.
- Before feeding the infant, check the temperature of the milk by putting a little drop of the milk onto the inside of your wrist—it should feel comfortably warm or even a little bit cool.
- Never microwave breast milk.
- Never refreeze thawed breast milk.
- Only warm the milk once, and discard any warmed milk that has not been used.

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

Where food is provided by the Service:

- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- The kitchen will keep a supply of fresh fruit and vegetables available that children can eat between meals or to supplement meals on the menu where appropriate.
- Plan and display seasonal menus that are based on sound menu planning principles and that meet the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care.
- Submit menu's to the Health Eating Advisory Service to ensure they meet the recommended nutritional guidelines for children.
- Communicate with families whenever the seasonal menu changes and make menus available via Educa so that families can plan home meals to compliment Service meals.
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.



- Ensure the weekly menu is displayed in an accessible and prominent area for parents to view.
- Have nutritional information available for families and keep updated on current recommendations from recognised authorities.
- Ensure the weekly menu is accurate and describes the food and beverages provided each day of the week.
- Present food attractively and where possible serve food separately, rather than mixed to cater for children's individual likes and dislikes.
- Provide age and developmentally appropriate utensils and furniture for each child to use at meal times.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for relevant employees to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Maintain links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating.

Where food is brought from home (for sessional kindergarten programs only):

- 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 (sometimes foods) that are 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.

All employees, volunteers and students will:

Promote healthy eating practices.

Only offer children food which has been purchased and prepared by the Service in line with the Service's Menu and/or Cooking Experiences process.

Ensure children are not given lollies, sweets or other sometimes/discretionary foods and that any cooking experiences are implemented in line with the cooking guidelines outlined in the Food Service Procedure.

Ensure water is readily available for all children to independently access throughout the day and monitor to ensure children are drinking adequate amounts of water.

Monitor children's food intake in the classrooms and encourage 'fussy' eaters to try a range of foods from the menu rather than prepare 'special' meals based only on foods they like. Food Preference Forms will only be used for children who have a specific health or cultural need.



Provide for individual children's needs

Encourage parents/guardians to discuss their child's nutritional requirements, food allergies or food sensitivities, and inform the Leadership Team where necessary.

Ensure children's individual dietary requirements are clearly displayed in rooms and communicated with all other educators.

Document and talk to families about their child's food and drink intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating or drinking.

Provide adequate supervision

Supervise children when they are eating.

Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.

Ensure all children remain seated while eating and are either seated or standing still while drinking

Provide tables and chairs for use at meal times (the Service does not support the practice of children eating whilst sitting on the floor, regardless of using a picnic rug).

Create a positive learning environment

Sit with children at meal and snack times to role model healthy eating 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.

Implement flexible meal time routines which take into account the individual needs of children, facilities available and minimising the times during which the children are expected to do the same thing at the same time. Progressive meal times are encouraged where possible (refer to Key References for further details on 'Progressive Mealtimes').

Encourage children to assist when setting up and clearing the tables and to serve their own food and drink, providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem.

Provide cups for drinking at meal times and encourage children to pour their own drinks (water bottles are for use between meals).



Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist that they finish the food on their plate.

Be patient with messy or slow eaters.

Encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat.

Food should not be used as a reward or a bribe or withheld from children for disciplinary purposes.

Encourage 'mindful eating' in children rather than 'emotional eating'. Emotional eating is turning to food for comfort, stress relief, or as a reward rather than to satisfy hunger.

If a child is laughing, crying or otherwise upset the child will be encouraged to wait before consuming food or drink.

Encourage young children to be independent and develop social skills at meal times.

As often as possible, serve food at the table in ways that allow the children to help themselves and decide if and how much they will eat.

Make serving platters, bowls, and utensils available and accessible to encourage children to serve themselves whilst also supporting fine muscle development and coordination.

Promote the development of key life skills such as pouring, serving and passing through meal times.

Educational Program

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.

Involve children in the food preparation process to provide authentic learning opportunities where children assume as much responsibility as possible: from growing, preparing, presenting and eating foods through to cleaning up and recycling the waste.

Encourage children to be independent at snack/meal times e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving and using utensils in a culturally-sensitive way.

Ensure that meal time routines are consistent for morning, afternoon and lunch time so that children know what to expect.

Respect the rights of children by creating opportunities for children to make decisions about when they are hungry and who they eat with.



Cooking Experiences Process (spontaneous and planned):

Plan cooking experiences that are in line with Service expectations surrounding healthy eating and celebrations and that link to the children's learning (refer to learning links below).

Encourage children to be involved in the preparation of foods on the menu where possible. This could be harvesting some produce, washing it and taking to the kitchen for use in meals or cutting up some vegetables for the main meal.

Utilise the recipe folder which has information about nutrition guidelines and suggested recipes.

Consider the individual dietary requirements of all children prior to implementing a cooking experience.

Implement cooking experiences in the 'Garden Room' where possible. Children's hands will need to be washed in the classroom before and after the cooking experience.

Fill out a Cooking Experience request form at least two weeks prior to the cooking experience if the cooking experience is not part of the daily menu to allow time for ingredients to be purchased. This form is to be signed off by the Kitchen Supervisor and relevant Educational Leader.

Consult with the kitchen team when implementing spontaneous cooking experiences to see if this is possible at short notice.

Use the 'cooking communication exercise book' located in the cooking station to document and communicate with the kitchen team when they are busy.

Ensure all dishes and utensils are thoroughly washed following use so that the kitchen team only need to sanitise them in the dishwasher.

Cooking Experiences and Links to Learning:

Social Emotional Development:

Hands on cooking experiences help children develop pride and confidence in their skills and abilities. The act of following a recipe can encourage self-direction and independence, while also supporting children to follow directions and use cognitive skills to problem solve.

Physical Development:

Chopping, squeezing, spreading, and mixing are all cooking skills that help develop children's fine motor skills, and hand-eye coordination. It's impossible to separate hands on cooking activities from physical development for young children- so please ensure children play an active role in these experiences.

Cognitive Development:

Cooking inspires children's curiosity, thinking, and problem solving, offering new opportunities to make predictions and observations. Additionally, cooking offers authentic opportunities for children to understand and apply their knowledge of measuring, one to one correspondence, numbers, and counting. As children follow a recipe, they organise ingredients, follow a sequence, and carry out multiple directions.



Language Development:

With its own vocabulary, cooking is a great opportunity for language development. Take advantage of opportunities for children to match pictures to words and articulate questions inspired by their new experiences.

Mathematics:

- Number concepts
- Simple addition
- Patterning (layered salads, kabobs)
- Measurement
- Data collection, organization, and representation (voting on who wants a particular recipe or ingredient)
- Simple fractions (half, whole, quarter)

The Arts:

- Drawing/painting fresh seasonal products (if an interest in the classroom)
- Picture recipes

Science:

- Life science (growing food in the garden)
- Physical science investigation (changing forms liquids, solids etc.)
- Making predictions and observations

Links to home/wider community:

- Share family/favorite recipes
- Discover the important role of farmers in communities
- Children's literature

The Kitchen Supervisor will:

Provide instructions for educators to allow them to be able to plan and implement cooking experiences within the programs.

- Maintain a folder with recipes and guidelines for cooking that teaching teams can access when planning cooking experiences as part of the program.
- Order ingredients needed for children's cooking experiences.
- Encourage children to take part in the preparation of meals where appropriate, e.g. assist with cutting or preparing vegetables to use in the lunch time meal.
- Liaise with the teaching teams to support the implementation of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

Parents/guardians will:

Comply with the requirements of this Nutrition and Dietary Requirements Procedure.



Provide Hawthorn Early Years and its educators with adequate details of their child's specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including cultural or religious practices or food allergies. This must be provided at enrolment and re-enrolment by accurately completing relevant forms provided by Hawthorn Early Years and by discussing these requirements with educators prior to the child's commencement at the Service

Ensure no prohibited food including nuts or 'sometimes' foods are included in children's lunchboxes for sessional programs. Examples of 'sometimes' foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, oven-baked crackers and corn chips.

Discuss any changes to a child's nutritional/dietary requirements over time with the child's educators.

Inform educator's when new foods have been introduced to a child at home and can be provided to the child at the Service.

Provide a clearly labelled and clean water bottle for their child each day that the child is in attendance at the Service.

Understand that individual meals cannot be provided for children unless there is a valid reason such as a diagnosed medical condition or specific cultural belief.

Supply adequate amounts of formula or expressed breast milk for babies, where required. It is not safe for parents to bring in prepared infant formula because of the small risk of bacteria growing in the bottle after it has been prepared. For this reason parents are asked to provide;

- Pre-measured powdered formula each day for all bottles required.
- Bottles and teats that are already sterilised and filled with the correct amount of pre-boiled, cooled water so that the pre-measured amount of formula can be added to the bottles.
- Expressed breastmilk in a named and dated bottle which must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer (any unused breast milk will be discarded).
- CLEARLY NAMED bottles, formula and feeding equipment.

See also:

1. Food Safety & Food Service Procedure
2. Diabetes Procedure
3. Anaphylaxis procedure
4. Hygiene Procedure
5. Environmental Education and Sustainability Procedure
6. Supervision of children procedure
7. Food Safety Plan



Key references

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing food and drink.

'Sometimes' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre.

Progressive Mealtimes: A meal table is made available for an extended period of time for small groups of children. The children choose to eat when they are hungry and ready, rather than being required to eat according to a regimented timetable. The normal indoor and outdoor program remains available during lunchtime and children can choose to finish an activity they are engaged in before coming to eat, or return to once they have finished their meal.

A full set of definitions can be found in the Policies and Procedures definitions list.