

Introduction

Good nutrition supports children's health, development, and learning. Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to practise social, language and self-help skills, and experience and learn about healthy foods. Teachers/educators will plan to create a pleasant and relaxed environment where children have the time to enjoy food, make choices and interact with others. When a centre provides meals as part of regular service provision, follow this procedure AND the *C&K Food Safety Program*.

Teacher/Educator responsibilities

Nutrition

- Regularly discuss and confirm children's dietary requirements with parents/guardians upon and throughout enrolment.
- Provide a daily written record of food consumption for children under two years of age.
- Regularly incorporate healthy eating concepts into the curriculum.
- Regularly promote healthy food choices as per the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) and [Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#) with children and families.
- Respect family, religious and cultural food preferences. This may require food/meals to be heated.
- Model and encourage healthy eating habits and positive attitudes towards food.
- Do not withdraw food from children or make judgments about food provided. Food choices lie with parents/guardians.
- Do not use food or drink to reward or punish.
- Ensure water is available and actively encourage drinking across the day.
- Discuss oral health with children and encourage children to drink water after meals.
- All early childhood services, regardless of whether or not a food licence is required, are encouraged to complete the free food handler training course [DoFoodSafely](#) to understand:
 - safe handling of food
 - food contamination
 - cleaning and sanitising of food premises and equipment
 - personal hygiene.

Mealtimes

- When possible, a child's *key educator* will be responsible for a child's mealtime routines.
- Follow [Hand Washing Procedure](#). Support children to wash and dry their hands before and after meals.
- Supervise children during mealtimes. Never leave babies unattended with a bottle or food.
- Encourage children to sit whilst eating.
- Strive to make mealtimes pleasant and relaxed experiences:
 - Slow down to the pace of the children. Be patient with slow or fussy eaters. Sit with and engage children in conversation.
 - When possible, set other teacher/educator tasks aside to be 'present'.
 - Be role model for healthy eating.
 - Model and discuss healthy food choices rather than instructing children in what and how much they will eat.
 - Encourage independence by supporting children to open lids, feed themselves and assist with mealtime tasks.
 - Be responsive to individual hunger needs by allowing children to eat outside routine mealtimes and feeding babies individually at different times.
 - Consider strategies that influence the 'mood' at mealtimes such as setting up tables in attractive manner (e.g. flowers, placemats) and arrange tables to enable small groups.
- Provide mealtime utensils that are age and developmentally appropriate.
- Support children to use tongs when sharing food from a communal plate.
- Ensure children do not share eating or drinking utensils or share food from others.
- Encourage children to turn away from food when they cough or sneeze, and then to wash and dry their hands.
- Always consume hot drinks away from children, in areas that are not used by children.

Children with food allergies, intolerances, and restrictions

- Regularly discuss and confirm children's dietary requirements with parents/guardians upon and throughout enrolment.
- Provide a daily written record of food consumption for children under two years of age.
- Be responsive to children's needs and parent/guardian instructions regarding food allergies, intolerances, and restrictions. This may require food to be heated.
- Consistently implement [Medical Conditions Procedure](#), [Anaphylaxis and Allergies Guide](#), [Undiagnosed Food Allergies, Intolerances and Restrictions Guide](#) and [Risk Minimising Plan Anaphylaxis](#).

Consistently implement (and periodically review) documented local level protocols and risk minimisation strategies to minimise exposure to a food allergy, intolerance, or restriction. Ensure all teachers/educators (including casuals) are familiar with local level protocols and risk minimisation strategies.

Preparing and serving meals

- Follow Hand Washing Procedure.
- Wear gloves if hands have cuts or abrasions, dressings, acrylic nail polish or large rings. Ensure all cuts are covered with kitchen band aids (blue in colour). Gloves do not need to be worn if hands are clean and dry.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before serving.
- Do not prepare and serve food if suffering from gastrointestinal or a cold/flu illness. Exclude ill teachers/educators from food prep and serving for 48hrs after illness has passed.
- Consider the food danger zone when preparing meals and heating or reheating food:
 - Reheat food to 75°C. Measure temperature with a food temperature thermometer. Clean with alcohol wipes before and after use and document food temperature.
 - Ensure food has cooled before serving by removing a small piece of food with a spoon to another plate and testing the temperature with a food temperature thermometer or on the inside of your wrist. Throw this piece of food away, wash spoon, and wash and dry hands.
 - Heat food or milk once only.
- Wash, sanitise and dry all plates and cutlery in the designated/labelled sink.
- Throw out leftovers and inform parents/guardians what food was uneaten.
- Clean food preparation surfaces, meal tables and chairs with soapy water and food grade sanitiser before and after meals. Clean floors after mealtimes.



Cook/kitchen staff responsibilities in centres that provide meals as part of regular service provision

- Prominently display a weekly menu for children and families and actively invite and consider feedback.
- Develop menus in consultation with teachers/educators, children, and families. Refer to *Feed Australia* - a free online menu planning tool, that assists centres develop menus that reflect the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.
- Provide a menu that reflects children's dietary needs (including food allergies, intolerances and restrictions) and recommendations as per the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood.
- Ensure centre's allergy list is up to date. Follow Managing food allergies, intolerances, and restrictions in C&K Kitchens Procedure when plating and serving children's meals.
- Hold a recognised nutrition/food handling qualification and consistently implement risk minimising strategies to prevent cross contamination of allergens during meal preparation.
- Complete DoFoodSafely online module annually. Mandatory from December 8, 2023 with an extension of Standard 3.3.2 food safety requirements.

Food storage

Educator/Teacher/Cook Responsibilities	Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and maintain fridge temperature at 5°C or below as part of the <u>Daily Safety Checklist</u> and/or accredited food safety program. • Store all dairy products inside the body of the fridge, not the door. • Respect family, religious and cultural food storage practices except where the health and safety of the child could be compromised. • Ensure food belonging to a child with allergies is stored separately in a sealed, airtight container in the refrigerator. Refer to <u>Anaphylaxis and Allergies Guide</u> for further direction. • Store dairy, meat, and cooked food in the refrigerator. • Store cooked food and uncooked meat separately in the refrigerator. Store raw meat on bottom shelf only. • Defrosted food should not be returned to the freezer. Use, heat or discard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon arrival, place food in designated area e.g. basket and/or refrigerator. Do not store food in insulated containers* within the refrigerator. • Seek direction from teachers/educators if unsure of your centre's food storage routine. • Store all dairy products in the body of the refrigerator, not the door.

- Display and refer to Food Safety Poster and implement food storage practices consistent with Food Safety Information Council recommendations.

- Name all food containers.

* When stored in the fridge, temperature within insulated containers may fluctuate and be inconsistent with the fridge temperature. When multiple insulated containers are stored in a fridge, air flow within the fridge is impeded, which in turn may impact the fridge temperature.
(Food Safety Council)

Bottle storage and preparation



Educator/Teacher Responsibilities	Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean bottle preparation surfaces before and after preparing bottles. • Prepare formula strictly according to manufacturer's instructions. • Discard bottle content that has been at room temperature for more than 1 hour. • Clean bottles in hot, soapy water, immediately after feeding. • Allow bottles to air dry. Do not attempt to sterilise bottles. • Send bottles home at the end of the day. <p>Breast Feeding/Milk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a private, comfortable area for mothers to breastfeed or express. • When thawing frozen breast milk, use the oldest milk first. • Thaw frozen breast milk in the refrigerator and use within 24hrs OR thaw by standing bottle in a container of lukewarm water and use straight away. • Discard 'leftover' breast milk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide daily clean and sterilised bottles that are clearly labelled with child's name and preparation date. • To prevent wastage, supply breast milk in separate small quantities. • Provide pre-prepared bottles OR provide pre-measured portions of formula powder. • Transport pre-prepared bottles in an insulated bag with an ice brick. Upon arrival, remove bottles from the insulated bag and place in the body of the refrigerator. • Provide the required number of bottles per day.

Bottle feeding

- Wherever possible, a child's 'key educator' will be responsible for bottle feeding.
- Slow down and provide the baby uninterrupted quality time and attention.
- Be flexible. Watch for and respond to hunger cues, rather than working by the clock.
- Wash and dry hands before and after feeding. There is no need to wear gloves if hands are clean and dry.
- Take great care to ensure formula or breast milk is never given to the wrong child.
- Before feeding, test bottle temperature with a sterilised food thermometer (no hotter than body temperature) or on the inside of the wrist.
- Never 'prop-up' a baby with a bottle. Nurse baby; hold on a slight incline.
- With close supervision and support and after consultation with parents, older babies who have the required motor skills, may bottle feed themselves. Promptly remove bottles from children when they have finished drinking.

Cooking with children

- Follow Hand Washing Procedure.
- Tie back long hair or wear a hairnet.
- Where possible, choose cooking experiences where food is cooked, as germs will be destroyed in the cooking process. The risk for uncooked foods can be lowered if children prepare food they will eat themselves e.g. fruit salad cups or sandwiches.

- **DO NOT** use eggs collected from centre/family-owned chickens in cooking experiences. Only use shop bought eggs that have been purchased from supermaket and stored safely, and within expiry date.
- Children should not participate in cooking experiences if they have had vomiting or diarrhoea within the previous 48hrs. If a centre has a recent outbreak of gastrointestinal disease, check with your local Public Health Unit before resuming cooking activities.

Considerations when using food in play

- Are there other sensory play alternatives to using food products? Discuss as a team and make decisions to meet the current needs of children.
- Consider possible cultural, participation rights and ethical issues. Engage with current families and determine whether using food products in play is appropriate and respectful.

Key references

- [Food Safety Information Council](#)
- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#)
- [Get Up and Grow; Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood](#)