

Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy [Mandatory] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators and families at all Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM) Services to eat nutritious food, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity and active play. To ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met, and to ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus and implementing nutrition, oral health and active play activities.

Policy Statement

MEYM is committed to:

- a) Creating policies and practices that promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about safe food preparation, nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met;
- b) Ensuring the buildings, grounds and facilities enable healthy eating, oral health and active play;
- c) Creating a culture in which all community members are respectfully supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be active;
- d) Providing children with formal and informal opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health and health messages about physical activity;
- e) Ensuring staff and educators have access to resources and support for their own healthy eating, oral health and physical activity;
- f) Engaging families, the service community and expert organisations in the promotion and implementation of healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- a) The Approved Provider (MEYM) or Persons with Management or Control,
- b) Nominated Supervisor;
- c) Persons in Day to Day Charge;
- d) Educators;
- e) Staff;
- f) Students on placement;
- g) Volunteers;
- h) Parents/guardians;
- i) Children; and
- j) Others attending the programs and activities of MEYM .

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Background and Legislation

Background

There are many benefits to promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour, oral hygiene practices and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.

As a health promoting service it is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health. Children, staff, educators and families can be supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be physically active through teaching and learning opportunities, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Nutrition

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods, and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide preschool children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age.

Oral health

Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being largely preventable. It is important to note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating.

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay affecting over half of all Australian children, making it five times more prevalent than asthma.

Active play

Active play (refer to *Definitions*) develops a strong and healthy body, builds motor and co-ordination skills, creates a sense of wellbeing and helps protect children from disease. Active play is about moving, being and doing.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition, oral health and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, – refer to *Sources*). Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, oral health and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*).

The Australian Government has guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings including the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines*, the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources and the *National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years* (refer to

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Sources). Practical, healthy eating advice is also available to early childhood services and schools via a telephone advice line: the Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Healthy Eating Advisory Service – refer to Sources), run by Nutrition Australia. Early childhood education and care services can also register and implement the *Achievement Program* (refer to Sources). This program is designed to create safe, healthy and friendly environments for children, staff educators and families, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 77-78, 79-80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Food Act 1984* (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

Policy Details

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play (refer to *Definitions*);
- Providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children (refer to *Sources*);
- Recognising families, educators and staff as role models and encouraging them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the service's Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy;
- Ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*);
- Ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*);
- Including healthy eating and oral health information and policy requirements in educator and staff orientation/induction

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- Ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children
- Ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)) (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.);
- Ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b));
- Ensuring educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives for children;
- Ensuring staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning;
- Ensuring that discretionary food and drinks do not appear in any sponsorship, fundraising or marketing activities;
- Ensuring celebrations and other service events such as end of term parties, promote healthy food options and limit discretionary options;
- Ensuring service facilities and equipment enable active travel and road safety for children, staff, educators and families;
- Ensuring space and facilities are available to allow staff and educators to store and prepare healthy food.
- Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours.
- Physical activity and healthy eating information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction.
- Local parks, bike paths and recreation facilities are used and promoted where appropriate to encourage physical activity.

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to learn about and make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play;
- Embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program, throughout the year;
- Ensuring oral hygiene practices are undertaken at the service where appropriate;
- Ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*);
- Ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis;
- Ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*);
- Ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children;
- Ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)). (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.);

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- Ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b));
- Registering and engaging the service with the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*);
- Ensuring that age-appropriate adult-guided and child-initiated active play is planned on a daily basis across all age groups;
- Ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development;
- Developing and reviewing guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents/guardians and families to focus on healthy alternatives;
- Providing families with information and strategies to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play and how to access relevant services (including local dental clinics);
- Developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating, oral health and active play;
- Ensuring educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to develop adult guided and child initiated active play experiences and promote healthy eating and oral health;
- Ensuring celebrations and other service events such as end of term parties, promote healthy food options and limit discretionary options;
- Considering this policy when organising excursions, service events and any sponsorship or marketing opportunities;
- Ensuring the layout of the grounds and buildings is inclusive of the diversity and abilities of all children and encourages physical activity and movement;
- Ensuring recommendations about physical activity and screen time from the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years) are met;
- Supporting active travel to and from the service;
- Ensuring staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning.

All educators/staff are responsible for:

- Complying with the service's *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy* and with the *Food Safety Act*;
- Being aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis;
- Implementing measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*);
- Being aware of, and planning for, the dietary needs of all children;
- Ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play;
- Discussing healthy eating choices with children and introducing the concept of 'sometimes' and everyday foods and drinks;

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- Providing a variety of cooking and food experiences that support children to develop food literacy and positive habits relating to food;
- Role-modelling positive eating, drinking and physical activity behaviours and promoting a healthy relationship with food;
- Ensuring that food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time;
- Exploring and discussing diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles
- Considering this policy when organising excursions and service events;
- Supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service;
- Keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play;
- Ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink regularly throughout the day, including at snack/meal times;
- Ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice);
- Providing food and drinks at regular intervals, and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/meal times without feeling rushed;
- Providing a positive eating environment and sitting and interacting with children at meal times;
- Encouraging 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;
- Providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program, including age-appropriate tooth brushing;
- Providing adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) for all children at all times, including at meal times;
- Ensuring children are not sedentary or inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping;
- Supporting children to develop collaboration skills during play;
- Planning and providing active play and movement experiences that are age-appropriate, inclusive of diversity and abilities and support children to develop fundamental movement skills;
- Considering opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions;
- Ensuring screen based activities do not exceed the recommendations in the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years);
- Providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to both children and parents/guardians at the service;
- Promoting safe behaviour through daily practice as part of the program.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Complying with the requirements of this policy;
- Providing details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on their child's enrolment form, and discussing these with the Nominated Supervisor prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy* and *Diabetes Policy*);

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- Communicating regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- Encouraging their child/ren to drink an adequate amount of water (preferably tap water), and discouraging 'discretionary' drinks;
- Providing healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables in line with the service's *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play* policy, where applicable
- Providing healthy, nutritious food, including fruits or vegetables for sharing at morning or afternoon tea, where applicable;
- Providing nutritious food and drinks for celebrations, fundraising activities and service events, consistent with service policy;
- Encouraging children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate;
- Dressing their child/ren so they can engage safely in active play.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- Regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- Keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required with all members of the service
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.
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Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and procedure. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to General definitions section in the policy and procedure folder.

Active play: Play that involves large muscle-based activities that are essential for a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development incorporating:

- Child-initiated active play, which is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games
- Adult-guided active play which encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment
- Physical activity, which includes sport, incidental exercise and many forms of recreation.

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Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- Number, age and abilities of children
- Number and positioning of educators
- Current activity of each child
- Areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- Developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- Experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- Need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

'Discretionary' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre. These can also be referred to as 'sometimes' foods and drinks.

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 substances.

Oral health: The absence of active disease in the mouth. Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

Supporting Documents and Templates

Sources

- Australian Dietary Guidelines 2019, National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Dental Health Services Victoria: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au


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- Department of Health (2013) *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*: <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-staffcarers>
- The Achievement Program is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers* (2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/npra-0-5yrs-brochure>
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th edition, 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.education.vic.gov.au

Service policies

- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Diabetes Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy
- Sun Protection Policy

Policy Control

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