

GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING FOR A GROUP SESSION/SERVICE

These sample guidelines are suitable for a group session or service provided for a couple of hours with parents/carers and children attending together, for example, playgroups.

Review and adapt the Sample Healthy Eating Guidelines in consultation with facilitators/staff, parents and carers so that it reflects your group's specific needs.

Healthy Eating Guidelines

Guideline Statement for group sessions/service

_____ (Insert group session/service name) recognises the importance of healthy eating for the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting healthy food and drink choices of children in their care. This guideline concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are attending the group session or service and the promotion of normal growth and development.

The group session or service is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages and to supporting the Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013).

Further, _____ (insert group session/service name) recognises the importance of supporting parents and carers in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the group session/service has an important role in supporting parents and carers in healthy eating.

This guideline aims to:

- Encourage and support breastfeeding and the appropriate introduction of solid foods.
- Promote healthy food and drinks based on the *Australian Dietary Guidelines and Infant Feeding Guidelines*.
- Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices.
- Provide a positive eating environment that reflects cultural and family values.
- Promote lifelong learning for children, facilitators/staff and parents/carers about healthy food and drink choices.
- Encourage communication with parents/carers about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the group session or service.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

1. Encourage and support breastfeeding (and appropriate introduction of solid foods)

The group session or service will:

Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.

- Provide a suitable place where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breastmilk.
- 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.
- Promote the safe handling of breastmilk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle-feeding.
- In consultation with parents and carers, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age.
- Promote the introduction of appropriate foods (type and texture) from around 6 months of age.
- Adjust the texture of foods offered between 6 and 12 months of age to match the baby's developmental stage, if food is provided by the group session or service.
- Offer a variety of foods to babies from all the food groups and encourage parents and carers to do the same if food is provided from home.
- Encourage parents and carers to supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle-feeding and eating practices at all times.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

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

The group session or service will:

Where food is provided by the service:

- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- Plan the morning, lunch or afternoon tea which will contribute to the daily nutritional needs of children.
- Plan healthy snacks to complement what is served at mealtimes (at home) and ensure they are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the snacks offered to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

Where food is brought from home:

- Provide information to parents and carers on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and suitable for consuming at the group session or service.
- Discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt and sugar and low in essential nutrients. Examples of these foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, oven-baked crackers and corn chips.

The group session or service will:

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the group session or service.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets and consult with parents and carers to establish appropriate snacks while at the group session or service.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Always supervise children while eating and drinking.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for facilitators/staff to undertake professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

3. Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices

The group session or service will:

- Ensure gloves are worn or food tongs are used by all facilitators/staff, children, parents and carers handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Ensure children, parents, carers and facilitators/staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 50C or above 60C.
- Separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Facilitators/staff attend relevant food-handling training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the facilitators/staff.

4. Provide a positive eating environment that reflects cultural and family values

The group session or service will:

- Ensure that parents/carers and facilitators/staff sit with the children at snack time to role model healthy food and drink choices 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.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

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- Create a relaxed atmosphere at snack time where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with facilitators/ staff, parents and carers and other children.
- Encourage older toddlers and pre-schoolers to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink - providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat.
- Do not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

5. Promote lifelong learning for children, facilitators/staff and parents and carers about healthy food and drink choices

The group session or service will:

- Include a range of healthy eating learning experiences, encouraging children's healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

6. Encourage communication with parents and carers about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the group session or service

The group session or service will:

- Provide a copy of the Healthy Eating Guideline to all parents and carers upon registration/orientation at the group session or service.
- Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the group session or service and work in partnership with parents and carers to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with parents and carers about food and nutrition related experiences within the group session or service and provide up to date information to assist parents and carers to provide healthy food choices at home.
- Communicate regularly with parents and carers and provide information and advice on appropriate food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes (when out for the day or as part of a school readiness program). This information may be provided in a variety of ways including fact sheets, newsletters, information sessions and informal discussion.

