

7.12 (a) Mealtimes Policy

Policy number: 7.12(a)
Date last reviewed: July 2023
Reviewed by: Child Care Team

This policy relates to	
National Quality Standards Early Childhood Education & Care	2.1.3 Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Purpose

Educators ensure that mealtimes are relaxed social occasions and that family cultures are accommodated.

Background

Children’s eating habits and attitudes are formed early in life and educators will endeavour to ensure that influences in their home contribute to a child forming healthy eating habits, and that mealtimes are pleasant social occasions.

Policy

Educator Strategies and Procedures

Children will be encouraged to participate in mealtime preparation with the development of self-help skills in setting the table, collecting food from the fridge and opening up packages.

Children should be encouraged to try foods, with likes and dislikes being respected.

Food will not be used as a form of punishment or reward.

Parents should be informed of how their child has eaten during the day.

Educators should endeavour to make mealtimes enjoyable for all children, sitting and eating with children and engaging in conversations while eating nutritious foods and taking opportunities to role model good hygiene and eating habits.

Educators will demonstrate good hand washing and food handling practices, and will ensure that children wash their hands before meal times and before handling food.

Comfortable and safe areas will be provided to ensure that children are sitting down while eating and drinking.

Children will be encouraged to participate in a variety of food experiences, to develop awareness of healthy eating habits, to gain awareness of other cultures and celebrations, to develop self-help skills, and independence. Educators will include cooking experiences with children and use this as an opportunity for children to learn skills including food handling procedures. Cooking experiences will accommodate children's allergies and intolerances.

Children who are beginning solid foods will be encouraged to gradually introduce one food at a time to ensure any allergies are detected. New foods should be introduced to children at home prior to care and discussed with educator. Foods that may be unsuitable or unsafe for a child will not be given. Educators will discuss individual requirements with parents and together plan the introduction of new foods.

Educators will provide a clean and hygienic environment and are encouraged to provide individual cups and plates for each child. Children should be encouraged to use individual serving utensils to foster self-help skills.

Utensils, cups, plates, chairs and tables should vary depending on the age of the child. The level of self-help skills should also vary depending on the age and ability of the child.

Animals should not be present while children are eating.

It is not a safe practice for children to eat in the car.

Meal times need to be planned to meet individual needs of each child.

