

Nutrition, Oral Health & Active Play Policy

Version	Final
NQF Requirements	Quality Area 2 - Mandatory
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Purpose

Highgate Early Learning Centre acknowledges the importance of healthy eating, oral health and physical activity and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy provides guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators, and families at the service to eat nutritious food, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity and active play.
- encourage children to make healthy lifestyle choices consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations
- 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.

Values

Highgate Early Learning Centre is committed to:

- promoting healthy lifestyle choices consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations about safe food preparation, nutrition, oral health, and physical activity
- ensuring that food and drink items provided by the service are consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations
- providing children with formal and informal opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health, and the importance of physical activity
- consulting and working collaboratively with families regarding their child’s nutrition and dietary requirements, including responding appropriately to food allergies and recognising cultural and religious practices and lifestyle choices
- implementing safe practices for the handling, preparing, storing, and serving food (Food Safety Policy and Food Safety Program)
- 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 the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, families, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Highgate Early Learning Centre.

Procedures

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

- ensuring the provision of nutritionally balanced and culturally sensitive meals, in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines
- ensuring that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, varied, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children’s growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(1))
- 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 information, resources, and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children (refer to *Sources*)
- 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 and Food Safety Program*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of children’s food allergies and dietary requirements, including children with diabetes (refer to *Diabetes Policy*) on enrolment or on initial diagnosis and measures are in place to ensure these requirements are met.
- 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 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)) (Unless inappropriate to the needs of a child, 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 there is a suitable area for breastfeeding
- ensuring there is a suitable space and facilities to allow staff and educators to store and prepare healthy food
- ensuring that celebrations, fundraising activities, and other service events are consistent with the purposes and values of this policy and service procedures.

- ensuring the cost of providing nutritionally balanced, culturally sensitive and meals that meet the dietary requirements of individual children are budgeted
- ensuring that staff who are responsible for menu planning participate in regular nutrition and are kept up to date with current research, knowledge, and best practice
- ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service’s Food Checker tool and meets the criteria determined
- ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1)).

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, Food Safety Policy and Food Safety Program*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child’s food allergies, dietary requirements 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)). (Unless inappropriate to the needs of the child, 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 that age-appropriate adult-guided and child-initiated active play is planned daily across all age groups
- ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children’s learning and development
- 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), if required

- 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
- 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 that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children’s growth and development in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(2))
- managing the Centre’s food budget in accordance to providing healthy nutritious balanced meal to the children at the centre.
- ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service’s Food Checker and meets the criteria determined
- ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1)).

All educators/staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service’s *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- implementing and complying with the Centre’s Food Safety Policy and Food Safety Program
- being aware of a child’s food allergies, dietary requirements and/or other medical conditions including diabetes on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis and ensuring children are provided with food which is safe for them to consume.
- implementing 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*)
- 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*)
- ensuring apple and pear skin is removed under the age of 2; fresh grapes sliced in lengthwise for all children under the age of 5
- 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
- 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
- liaising with families and accommodating the individual needs of infant’s nutritional requirements
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play regarding individual children and the group (as required)
- 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/mealtimes
- ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink bottles
- ensuring children’s drink bottles are emptied and sanitised at the end of each day
- providing food and drinks at regular intervals, and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/mealtimes without feeling rushed
- providing a positive eating environment and sitting and interacting with children at mealtimes
- encouraging children to be independent at snack/mealtimes in a culturally sensitive way e.g., pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving, and using utensils
- providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program
- providing adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*), for all children at all times, including at mealtimes
- encouraging children to engage in active play as needed
- planning and providing active play and movement experiences that are age-appropriate, diverse, cater for a range of abilities, and support children to develop fundamental physical skills.
- providing opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions and acting as role models by engaging in active play
- providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to children including during excursions
- displaying menus, sharing recipes, and encouraging feedback about the food provided at the service.
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of this policy
- ensuring no food is brought into the Centre

- 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*)
- communicating regularly with educators/staff regarding children’s specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- providing a drink bottle for their child which remains at the Centre
- 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.

Acknowledgements

This policy is based on the ELAA Nutrition, Oral Health & Active Play Policy which was last updated in June 2020.

Attachments

- Attachment 1: Background and legislation
- Attachment 2: Definitions
- Attachment 3: Sources and related policies

Attachment 1: 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 *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.

Progressive mealtimes

In recognising children as active participants in their own learning, children should be encouraged to make meaningful decisions about elements of their own education and care. Incorporating progressive mealtimes into the educational program allows children to choose to eat when they are hungry, rather than according to a timetable. Children can gather in small groups to enjoy meals together, without interrupting the needs and play of others. This also encourages quieter, more social, and meaningful interactions at mealtimes and allows for a smoother flow throughout the day. Children can make decisions based on their own needs and can be supported to access food and water throughout the day by educators/staff, who actively participate in mealtimes.

A decision with respect to incorporating progressive meal times into the educational program must take into account the needs of all children at the service, particularly children with specific medical conditions such as diabetes. The National Regulations require services to ensure that children with medical conditions are able to participate fully in the educational program, and are not discriminated against in any way.

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)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* including Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Food Act 1984* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard* including Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

Attachment 2: Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g., Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* schedule attached.

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.

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.

Attachment 3: Sources and related policies

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
- 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

Attachment 3: Sources and related policies (*continued*)

Service policies

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