

09 Standard Childcare Practice

09.8 Snack-times and mealtimes

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager e.g. picnic on a blanket.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing when appropriate. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds, but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough. Children are encouraged to have snack.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

Mealtimes

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.
- Children help staff set tables.
- Children's places are personalised with, for example, mats that they make for themselves and have laminated.
- Their food is brought to their room in serving dishes for each table. Dishes are not kept in a food warmer or oven so will not be too hot to touch.
- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
- Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.
- Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are only encouraged to try new foods slowly.
- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.

- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
- There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends on other tables.
- After lunch children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parent's notice board, including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
 - identification of any foods containing allergens