

Healthy Eating and Food Handling Policy

Southern Montessori ELC

Version	Approved By	Date	Maintained By	Next Review
3	Board of Governors	Sept 2023	Management	Sept 2026

Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
	78	Food and beverages
	79	Services providing food and beverages
	80	Weekly menu
	90	Medical conditions policy
	91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
	160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator

QA	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
	2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
	2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury
	3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
	6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
	6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing

Background

Learning about how to live in a healthy way, and being able to take increasing responsibility for making good health choices and caring for themselves, enables children to experience wellbeing in their present lives, and lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future.

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Policy Statement

This Policy details the Centre’s approach to mealtimes when the food and beverages consumed by children while at the Centre are provided by their parents. It describes the way educators use mealtimes for a happy and social occasion, and for developing lifelong healthy food choices. The Centre follows recommended safe food storage and preparation guidelines to ensure children’s protection from food borne illness.

Strategies and Practices

Training and Professional Development

- Educators will be provided with on-going professional development opportunities to refresh their knowledge of children’s dietary needs, and food handling and hygiene practice.
- Educators will role model healthy eating behaviours and practices and follow the Healthy Eating and Food Handling Policy.
- All educators are expected to complete I’m Alert Food Safety delivered online by Environmental Health Australia. Educators are also encouraged to undertake professional development and training opportunities in food preparation, storage and hygiene practices.

Healthy Snacks and Meals

- With the exception of a late afternoon snack, parents supply the majority of their children’s food requirements while at the Centre and for excursions. Parents are encouraged to pack in their child’s lunch box only food that is consistent with the traffic light system that has been produced by the school in line with guidelines from Nutrition Australia.
- Late afternoon snack will be provided for children attending the extended day. Snacks will be nutritious and adequate in quantity. The food provided will take into consideration any dietary needs of the children in attendance. Any specific cultural, religious or medical needs will be adhered to. The weekly menu for the late afternoon snack will be displayed.
- The centre aims to provide food that is locally sourced and produced and seasonal wherever practical.
- Safe drinking water is readily accessible to children at all times, and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals.
- Meal times are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Children are encouraged to be independent. They choose what to eat from their lunch boxes and developmentally appropriate eating utensils are provided.
- Educators sit and eat with children, interact on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, the importance of eating healthy food, food preferences and allergies, safe food handling and storage practices, and support the development of social skills.
- Whilst children are encouraged to eat healthy food from their lunchboxes, they are not required to eat food they do not like or to eat more than they want. Additionally, food is never used to reward or punish children.
- Educators promote activities that provide children with knowledge, attitudes and skills to make positive healthy food choices, and learn about the variety of foods available for good health. Educators intentionally teach children the importance of food safety and hygiene practices during both planned and spontaneous experiences.
- Educators follow guidelines to prevent choking on food and ensure parents/carers are aware how to make food safer to eat for children.

Consulting and Communicating with Families

- The Centre’s Healthy Eating and Food Handling Policy is explained to parents at enrolment.
- Parents are provided with information about nutritious, age-appropriate food and drink, and with healthy lunch box tips. The healthy eating message and food safety and hygiene practices are promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the Centre’s website and up-to-date materials from recognised authorities.

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- Parents are informed of their child’s food and beverage intake by the return to home of unopened and uneaten food in lunch boxes. Educators discuss with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well or has been exceptionally hungry during the day.

Food Allergies, Intolerances and Cultural Requirements

- At enrolment, parents provide the Centre with details of their child’s food and drink allergies and of any cultural preferences. The enrolment and emergency contact forms have provision for parents to provide details of any special dietary requirements (e.g. allergies, culture, religion, food preferences). Parents are asked to update this information when any changes occur. This information is needed for those times when children may be offered items not from home (e.g. during cooking experiences). For this reason, children are actively discouraged from sharing food.
- The Centre maintains a list and photographs of children with special food requirements for health or medical reasons (e.g. allergies, intolerances). This information is displayed in the food preparation area. Relief educators are informed of these dietary requirements at the start of the day.
- Families will be notified when a child has been identified with a serious allergy. In this case the Centre will take all reasonable steps to ensure that staff, children and families are allergy aware to minimise the risk of a serious reaction.
- Birthdays are an important part of a child’s life, and educators and children are encouraged to celebrate them at the Centre. Parents are welcome to bring a healthy snack that complies with our policy to share. Fruit can be washed and prepared at preschool. Other food must be in the original unopened wrap or container, with current use-by date clearly displayed and a full list of ingredients. A full list of ingredients must also be provided for home cooked food. Food must be transported in an insulated bag or box.

Hygiene, Safe Food Handling and Storage Practices

- Educators follow all regulatory food handling and hygiene practices.
- Educators maintain a high level of personal hygiene (e.g. wash and dry hands thoroughly, tie hair back, cover cuts with coloured band aids before gloves are put on, no hand jewellery except engagement and wedding rings).
- Educators ensure that children wash hands using appropriate hand washing techniques before eating.
- Educators intentionally teach children to turn away from food when they cough or sneeze, and to follow up with washing hands.
- Tables are cleaned with sanitizing spray before being used for meals. Kitchen work surfaces are washed and sanitized before being used for food preparation.
- Children are taught to sit down when eating and encouraged to clean and tidy their eating area when finished.
- All plates, bowls, crockery and any other food utensils used by children and in the preparation of food are washed in water as hot as possible with detergent, rinsed in clean hot water and allowed to air dry. If drying is still required, a clean tea towel is used and the tea towel replaced after use.
- Children’s food utensils and crockery are kept in good condition and are stored in a container with easy access to ensure hygienic handling.
- The designated food preparation area in the kitchen is used for that purpose only, and is cleaned before and after use. The rubbish bins are emptied daily. The kitchen floor is swept as and when required and mopped daily. Food areas, cupboards and appliances are cleaned thoroughly and regularly.
- To prevent cross-contamination between work areas, staff use the Wash Cloths Colour Chart to select the appropriate cloth. In addition, cleaning implements such as gloves and scourers are confined to specific areas. The coloured wash cloths are replaced frequently.
- Parents are asked to place their child’s lunch and snacks in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack. These are stored in the kitchen area. Upon request, certain high risk foods can be stored in the refrigerator.

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Cooking experiences

- Educators and children follow food safety and hygiene practices.
- Educators ensure food is cooked at the appropriate temperatures to eradicate any germs that maybe present though the preparation stage.
- Food is served using tongs.
- Potentially hazardous hot food, once prepared, is kept covered in the oven or on the stove (above 60oC) until it is time to be served. Educators check that food has cooled before giving it to children. All food is served within two hours of being cooked. Then it is either refrigerated or discarded.

Refrigerator and Freezer Items

- The operating temperature of the refrigerator is checked weekly with a thermometer and the results recorded on the Temperature Control Log. Foods are stored at the correct temperature depending on the product. Cold foods need to be stored at less than 5 degrees (C).
- The refrigerator is cleaned regularly, and seals checked for signs of mould.
- Appropriate storage containers and wraps are used (e.g. freezer safe containers, moisture-proof wrap such as foil and freezer bags). When wraps are used, food is completely covered.
- Any food removed from its original packaging is stored in an air-tight container labelled with the use-by date, the contents, and the date it was stored.
- Staff inspect all food items to be refrigerated when the items are first brought into the Centre to ensure they are all in good order and well within their use-by period.
- Raw and cooked foods are stored separately to avoid cross-contamination. Raw foods are stored on shelves below cooked foods so that juices do not drip and contaminate the cooked food.

Responsibilities of Parents

- To provide food and beverages for their child which are consistent with the Centre’s Healthy Eating and Food Handling Policy.
- To provide the Centre with details of their child’s known food allergies at enrolment, and to inform the Centre immediately any changes occur.
- To discuss their child’s food allergies, if any, with their child and to ensure they understand the importance of not sharing food.
- To wash and dry their child’s food containers thoroughly and pack food in a clearly labelled insulated lunch bag with an ice pack.

Links to Other Policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Injuries, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Managing Infectious Diseases Policy
- Cleaning Policy

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Sources, Further Reading and Useful Websites

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Early Years Learning Framework 2023
- Environmental Health Australia I'm Alert Food Safety(2023)
- National Quality Standard 2018
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). Staying healthy in child care: Preventing infectious diseases in child care. 5th Ed. accessed June 2023
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_childcare_5th_edition_0.pdf
- Department of Health (2015). Get up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood Resources:
<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/family-book-get-up-and-grow-family-book.pdf>
Date Accessed: June 2023

Further reading

- SA Health: Eat a Rainbow Resources.
<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/healthy+eating/healthy+eating+at+different+ages+and+stages+of+your+life/healthy+eating+for+kids+and+teens/eat+a+rainbow+resources> . Date Accessed: June 2023
- Nutrition Australia. (n.d.) Factsheets for Healthy Eating <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resources>

Useful websites

- Nutrition Australia – www.nutritionaustralia.org/vic/nutrition-services-early-learning-centres

Document History and Version Control Table

Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1	2017	Board of Governors	Creation of original document
2	Oct 2020	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
3	Sept 2023	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board

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