

Food Safety and Nutrition Policy



WHAT are we talking about in this document?

This policy outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders in providing all children with access to healthy food and drink prepared in food safe environments.



WHO is this for?

This policy applies to children, families, staff, visitors and management of the service.



WHY do we need this policy?

We recognise the importance of healthy eating for the growth, development and wellbeing of children and we are committed to providing and supporting healthy food and drink choices for the children within our care.

We are also committed to ensuring consistently high standards of food preparation, food storage and food transport are adhered to.

THE IMPORTANT STUFF

Food Hygiene and Safety

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov, 2019).

Our Service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Program. All kitchens and food preparation areas will comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ). All staff involved in the stages of food handling have skills and knowledge to ensure food safety is a priority.

Buying and transporting food:

Our Service will:

- Always check labels for the 'use by' and 'best before' dates, understanding that 'use by' dates apply to perishable foods that could potentially cause food poisoning if out of date, whilst 'best before' dates refer to food items with long shelf life but quality could be compromised.
- Avoid buying food items in damaged, swollen, leaking or dented packaging.
- Always check eggs **within cartons**: Never buy dirty or cracked eggs.
- Never buy any food item if unsure about its quality.
- Ensure fresh meat, chicken, or fish products cannot leak on to other food items.
- Ensure chilled, frozen, and hot food items are kept out of the 'danger zone' (5°C to 60°C) on the trip back to the Service by:
 - Not getting chilled frozen, or hot food items until the end of the shopping.
 - Placing these items in an insulated shopping bag or cooler.
 - Immediately unpacking and storing these items upon the return to the Service.

Online shopping

- ensure food items are delivered in packaging that keeps food out of 'danger zones' as described above and within delivery window as provided by the company
- ensure products selected are high quality
- ensure products are unpacked promptly upon receiving goods
- use online service company with product and guarantee

Storing food:

Our Service will:

- Ensure the refrigerator and freezer has a thermometer and that the refrigerator is maintained at 5 °C or below and the freezer is maintained at -17 °C or below.
- Ensure fridge and freezer temperatures are checked daily.
- Store raw foods below cooked foods in the refrigerator to avoid cross contamination by foods dripping onto other foods.
- Ensure that all foods stored in the refrigerator are stored in strong food-safe containers with either a tight-fitting lid, or tightly applied plastic wrap or foil.
- Ensure that all foods not stored in their original packaging are labelled with:
 - The name of the food,
 - The 'use by' date,
 - The date the food was opened,
 - Details of any allergens present in the food.
- Transfer the contents of opened cans into appropriate containers.
- Ensure all bottles and jars are refrigerated after opening.
- Place 'left-over' hot food in an appropriate sealed container in the refrigerator as soon as the steam has stopped rising. Food can be cooled quickly to this point by placing in smaller quantities in shallow containers, reducing the amount of time sitting in the 'danger zone'.
- Not reuse disposable containers (e.g. Chinese food containers).
- Store dry foods in labelled and sealed, air-tight containers if not in original packaging.
- Store dry foods in cupboards or if in a walk-in pantry, on shelving no lower than 30cm from the floor.
- Not place anything on the floor of a walk-in pantry (as containers of any type create easy access to shelves for mice and rats).
- Store bulk dry foods only in food-safe and airtight containers.
- Use the FIFO (first in, first out) rule for all foods (dry, chilled, and frozen) to ensure rotation of stock so that older stock is used first.
- Store cleaning supplies separate to food items.

Preparing and serving food:

Our Service will:

- Ensure that all cooked food is cooked through and reaches 75 °C.
- Ensure that cooked food is served promptly, or
- Use a thermometer to ensure that hot food is maintained at above 60 °C until ready to serve.
- Ensure that prepared cold food is stored in the refrigerator maintained at below 5 °C until ready to serve.
- Discard any cooked food that has been left in the 'danger zone' for two or more hours. Do not reheat.
- Reheat cooked food (if required, for example for a child who was sleeping at lunch time) to a temperature of 70 °C (but only ever reheat once. Discard if the food is not eaten after being reheated).
- Keep cooked and ready-to-eat foods separate from raw foods.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly under clean running water before preparation.
- Ensure unused washed fruit or vegetables are thoroughly dry before returning to storage.
- Ensure food that has been dropped on the floor is immediately discarded.
- Thoroughly clean kitchen utensils and equipment between using with different foods and/or between different tasks.
- Avoid cross-contamination by ensuring that separate knives and utensils are used for different foods.
- Avoid cross-contamination by ensuring that colour-coded cutting boards are used (note that it doesn't matter which colour you use for which food providing signs are displayed to alert all staff).
- Ensure that gloves are changed between handling different foods or changing tasks.
- Ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels.

- Ensure that food allergies and intolerances are catered for by using separate easily identifiable cutting boards, utensils, and kitchen equipment (e.g. using a colour code, or food-safe permanent marker).
- Ensure all educators and staff are aware of children who have severe allergic reactions to certain foods as per ASCIA Action Plans.
- Ensure that children with food allergies and/or intolerances are served their meals and snacks individually on an easily identifiable plate (e.g. different colour), and that food is securely covered with plastic wrap until received by the child to prevent possible cross-contamination.
- Ensure that unwell staff do not handle food.

Cleaning:

Our Service will:

- Ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation.
- Ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitised before use.
- Ensure that all dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and allowed to air dry or placed in the dishwasher.
- Ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight.
- Ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair.
- Prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently.
- Ensure that floor mops are thoroughly cleaned and air dried after each use.
- Replace any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling.

Personal hygiene for food handlers:

Our Service will ensure:

- Clean clothing is worn by food handlers (such as an apron or appropriate jacket).
- Long hair is tied back or covered with a net (hairspray may be used for fringes to secure hair).
- Hand and wrist jewellery is not worn while preparing food (e.g. rings and bracelets).
- Nails are kept short and clean and no nail polish is worn (as it can chip into food and hide dirt under the nails).
- Strict hand-washing hygiene is adhered to, including washing hands each time they return to the kitchen before continuing with food preparation duties.
- Wounds or cuts are covered with a brightly coloured, waterproof dressing (that will easily be seen if it falls off), and gloves will be worn over any dressings.
- Staff who are not well will not prepare or handle food.

All staff handling food will:

- Ensure gloves (or food tongs) are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures (below 5°C or above 60°C), with consideration to the safe eating temperature requirements of children.
- Ensure separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken, fruit and vegetables, and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Ensure food-handling staff members attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information on to the rest of the staff.

The service's Food Safety Program is to be followed at all times.

Nutrition

Infants and Babies

Support breastfeeding, ensure safe bottle feeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods

Our Service will:

- Support mothers who choose to continue breastfeeding while offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 months of age.
- Ensure the safe handling of breast milk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.
- In consultation with families, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age.
- Educators will hold dependent babies being bottle fed in a secure semi-upright position.
- Educators will ensure babies feeding experience is calm and comforting
- Educators will engage gently with feeding babies using appropriate words and song.
- Work in close consultation with the family to ensure appropriate weaning foods (type and texture) are introduced.
- Adjust the texture of foods offered between 6 and 12 months of age to match the baby's developmental stage.
- Offer a variety of foods to babies from all the food groups.
- Supervise babies whenever they are drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle-feeding and eating practices at all times.

To reduce the risk of choking in infants, all educators will ensure:

- Children are supervised while eating and drinking from bottles
- Children are not put to bed with a bottle (as per Sleep, Rest and Relaxation Policy)
- Bottles are never propped up. Only children who can safely hold their own bottle are supported in feeding without an educator holding the bottle.
- Children are awake and alert when being offered food or bottles
- Children are never forced to eat
- Babies are never offered pieces of hard raw fruits and vegetables, popcorn or other hard foods.

Keiki will:

- Follow the guidelines of Get up & Grow (2013), Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for children aged 0-12 years and Eat for Health, Australian dietary guidelines 2013.
- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- Plan and display the service menu that is based on sound menu planning principles and meets the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care.
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

The Coordinator and Educators will:

- Ensure information stating the service is an allergy aware service is clearly visible to all staff, families and visitors to the service.

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets and consult with families to develop individual health care plans.
- Ensure that the photograph and support information of any child with food allergies is pinned to the health care plan board in a discreet part of the room, whilst visible to staff.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Ensure all children are always supervised while eating and drinking.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for the service cook and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Educators will follow the guidelines for serving different types of food and the serving sizes in the Guidelines and may use the Australian Government “eat for health” calculator <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eat-health-calculators>.
- Display nutritional information for families and keep them regularly updated.
- Ensure the weekly menu is accurate and describes the food and beverages provided each day of the week and is displayed in an accessible and prominent area for families to view.
- Ensure food is presented attractively
- Ensure infants are fed individually by educators
- Ensure age and developmentally appropriate utensils and furniture will be provided for each child.
- Not allow food to be used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe.
- Encourage and support children to develop self-feeding skills at mealtimes.
- Recognise mealtimes as a social occasion.
- Establish healthy eating habits in the children by sharing information about healthy foods in the room in fun and age appropriate ways
- Talk to families if there is any concern about a child’s food intake and eating habits.
- Share information with families through a variety of ways to support and encourage continued healthy eating in the home
- Ensure fridge and freezer temperatures are taken daily, working in compliance with the National Food Authority.
- Ensure the Food Safety Plan is followed at all times and is reviewed at least every 6 months.

Birthdays and Special Events

No food is to be brought into the service for special events or birthdays. Each Keiki Early Learning Service has their own ritual to celebrate these special occasions in the children’s lives and will communicate directly with families.

Creating a positive learning environment

Our service will:

- Ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role model healthy food, drink choices and actively engage children in conversations using natural opportunities about the food and drink provided.
- Recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.
- Encourage older toddlers, Kindy age and school age children 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 more.
- Be patient with messy, slow or sensory challenged eaters.

- Encourage children to try different foods and accept their decision not to.
- Never use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

Educational Program

Our Service will:

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through natural opportunities at mealtimes as well as providing age appropriate information and play experiences to enhance each child's understanding of healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in 'hands-on' food preparation experiences when possible.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.
- Create herb and vegetable gardens that can be used within the kitchen
 - Children can assist in the collection and harvesting of their home grown produce to add to the service menu.
 - Where possible, the service cook/nutrition coordinator to speak to the children about the cycle of plants and vegetables.

Cooking with children

Cooking can help develop children's knowledge and skills regarding healthy eating habits. Cooking is a great, fun activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills. On these occasions participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

Communicating with families

Our Service will:

- Provide access to this policy to families via a link to the Policy and Procedure website page.
- Families will be provided with opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the policy.
- Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the service and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.
- Communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on appropriate food and drink that could be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

FOOTNOTES

Source

- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2017,
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- Early Years Learning Framework
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand
- Safe Food Australia, 2nd Edition. January 2001

- Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood
- Infant Feeding Guidelines 2012
- Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013
- Eat for health: Dept. Health and Ageing and NHMRC
- Food Safety Standards for Australia 2001
- Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Regulations 1994
- Food Act 2003
- Food Regulation 2004
- NSW Food Authority
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
- Dental Association Australia
- Australian Breast Feeding Association Guidelines
- Munch and Move
- Children's Health Queensland- Bottle Feeding Safety Tips
- Health.gov.au – Choking risks for babies

Related regulations and standards

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
80	Weekly menu
90	Medical conditions policy
91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Early Years Learning Framework

Learning Outcome 3	
3.2	Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.

Review & document control

Policy Reviewed	Modifications
August 2017	Extension of Policy from regulations and set out expectations for all parties
13 th November 2017	Panel review policy. Changes included slight grammatical errors and a section about labelling the food with the child's name and type of food to ensure all educators know which child is to receive the specially prepared food (Mandy B)
8th January 2018	Quality Area updated to reflect changes to NQS. Centre Director term to Coordinator.
10th November 2018	Grammatical errors corrected.
June 2019	Updated onto new format and new Keiki logo added
6 th May 2020	Coordinator meeting informed changes. Added more food safety information (Buying and transport. Storing. Preparing and Serving. Cleaning. Personal Hygiene and food handler information). Set it out clearer. Added information about birthdays. Added to ensure weekly menu is displayed for families. Added information about reviewing food safety plan.

15th June 2020	Checked against staying healthy.
June 2021	Review conducted throughout organisation. Change to layout (new template). Food Safety information first. Nutrition next. Added section regarding Babies and Infants as well as reducing choking risk. Added to educational program- create herb and vegetable gardens for produce to add to meals and cook/nutritional coordinator to interact with children. A separate Policy for 2 plus/3 plus and OSHC services created as they do not have babies and do not provide meals. Also added online shopping information, cooking temp to 75c and cooking with children.