



NUTRITION, HEALTHY EATING AND ORAL HEALTH POLICY (ELC)

1 PURPOSE

The Minaret Early Learning Centre educators, staff and management acknowledge the importance of healthy eating and oral health behaviours that contribute to overall health and wellbeing.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- Encourage children to make healthy food and drink choices
- Promote the importance of a healthy lifestyle, which includes drinking water, eating healthy food and maintaining oral health

As a health promoting service we will promote the oral health of our children, educators, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

2 BACKGROUND

Children in long term Early Learning Centres may receive 50%-70% of their daily food intake whilst at the Early Learning Centre. Healthy eating and good nutrition have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. The important social and cultural role of food, and the wide range of attitudes to it, is acknowledged within the service. It is therefore important to help children develop good food and attitude habits, and encourage parents to provide adequate nutrition.

Oral health is essential for children's overall health and wellbeing. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay, affecting over half of all Australian children. Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being preventable.

It is important to provide access to and establish good healthy eating and oral health practices at a young age as most children have formed lifelong habits by school age.

3 WHOLE SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

It is recognised that all members of the Minaret College ELC service including management, staff, educators, children and families can contribute to creating an environment that promotes and supports healthy eating and oral health.

4 DEFINITIONS

Oral Health: Eating, speaking and socialising without discomfort or embarrassment.

Healthy Eating: Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are:

- Fruit
- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.

Nutrition: The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.

‘Sometimes’ foods and drink:

Sometimes foods are high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged.

5 PROCEDURES

5.1 HEALTH POLICIES

- Educators, staff, families and children are active participants in the development and implementation of the whole service healthy eating and oral health policy
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements.

5.2 HEALTHY PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Families are required to provide children with nutritious food and snacks from home, that are adequate in quantity and take into account dietary requirements appropriate to each child’s growth and development and energy needs, cultural, religious or health requirements
- Families are encouraged to provide fruit and vegetables daily in children’s lunchboxes and other foods in line with the services healthy eating and oral health policy
- The service incorporates the use of fresh fruit, vegetables and wholegrain foods as much as possible, without added salt or sugar
- Sometimes food and sweetened drinks (juices, cordial and soft drinks) are not provided by the services and are discouraged from being sent from home
- Children will have access to safe drinking water at all times, available both indoors and outdoors. Children are encouraged to drink water regularly
- Children will be encouraged (not forced) to try different foods, and foods will not be withheld from children, unless for dietary reasons
- No nuts or nut products will be used within the service; however some pre-packaged goods may contain traces of nuts. Parents are encouraged to speak to the ELC teacher if their child is unable to eat food products that contain traces of nuts

- Staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning
- The ELC service seeks to ensure any sponsorship, advertisements or marketing of food and drinks are consistent with the service's healthy eating and oral health policies. Fundraising activities reflect the healthy eating and oral health policy and promote healthy lifestyle messages
- Children are encouraged to eat hard fruit and to drink water after meals to cleanse their mouth.

5.3 HEALTHY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- The service provides a positive eating environment with relaxed, social and enjoyable experiences by: encouraging independence and social skills at meal times, educators actively participating, role modelling and supervising at meal times, giving children plenty of time to eat
- Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time
- As role models, educators, staff and families are encouraged to bring foods and drinks that are in line with the service's healthy eating and oral health policies
- Food and oral health practices from diverse cultural practices and traditional beliefs are respected and valued within this service.

5.4 LEARNING AND SKILLS

- Educators and staff establish healthy eating habits in children by the incorporation of nutritional education in the program
- Educators and staff involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping,
- Educators talk to children about age appropriate tooth brushing and why this is important
- Children are provided with information on good oral health through the educational program
- Educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote oral health initiatives for children

5.5 ENGAGING CHILDREN, EDUCATORS, STAFF AND FAMILIES

- Educators, staff, children and families are key partners in developing and supporting healthy eating and oral health initiatives
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies on a regular basis to support healthy eating and oral health in the service and at home
- Families' experiences, expertise and interests are drawn upon to support healthy eating and oral health initiatives
- Families and children from culturally diverse backgrounds are consulted to ensure cultural values and expectations about healthy eating and oral health are respected
- This service will regularly provide families with information on oral hygiene and how and where to access public dental services

5.6 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The service works with local health professionals, services and other organisations to support educators and staff to deliver and promote healthy eating and oral health initiatives

6 EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, Minaret College will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- 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

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