



Healthy Early Years

Food for Thought

Planning for effective snack and mealtimes that encourage talk and promote healthy eating.



Supporting Children's Communication from Birth

For more information contact:

Lucy Rae, Healthy Early Years Coordinator
Email: lucy_rae@bathnes.gov.uk
07530 263098

Ali Temme, Early Language Consultant
Email: alison_temme@bathnes.gov.uk
07875 488044

With information adapted from:

“Tackling Child Obesity with HENRY A handbook for community and health practitioners.”
Candida Hunt & Mary Rudolph 2008

For more information about HENRY visit www.henry.org.uk

“Every Child a Talker Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners”
National Strategies Early Years 2008



Food for Thought Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
10 Top Tips for Snack and Mealtimes	3
10 Top Tips for Talking	5
Whole Group Snack	7
Free Flow Snack	9
What shall we give them?	11
What makes a portion?	15
Food Group Planner	17
Responsive Feeding	19
Encouraging Children	21
How to create better eaters	23
Allergies	25
Food Safety and Hygiene	29
Moving Forward	33
Snack and Mealtime Audit	35



Food for Thought Introduction

It is recommended that young children eat regularly to meet their energy need for growth and development. Offering appropriately sized portions of nutritious food and drink over 3 mealtimes and 2 snacks during the day will ensure this. But healthy eating is much more than just what we eat.

Mealtimes are a socially and culturally important part of life. Sharing and enjoying food together unites people and offers a place for talking and listening.

It is not always easy to meet children's needs consistently but ideally snack and mealtimes should be spent sitting together without distraction and taking the time to eat slowly and sociably.

Creating opportunities for social interaction at snack and mealtimes will not only encourage healthy eating patterns but also support children's language and communication skills from the earliest stage.

Did you know?

- In Bath & North East Somerset 24.2% of children starting school in Reception are overweight or obese, that's almost 1 in every 4. (2009/2010. Data taken from National Child Measurement Programme.)
- The 'how', 'why' and 'when' children eat is as important as 'what' children eat. Healthy eating patterns and positive relationships with food are established in children's earliest years.
- A key factor in establishing healthy eating lies in understanding hunger and fullness cues. Babies and young children have an inbuilt fuel gauge that helps them regulate their own appetite. When this is overridden (eg by adults overfeeding or eating whilst watching TV) children begin to eat for reasons other than hunger. Coupled with using food as a comfort or reward, the balance and intake can be skewed even more.

Creating a relaxed, informal family atmosphere at snack and mealtimes will help establish healthy eating habits and encourage positive communication and social development.

However you choose to organise your snack and mealtimes there are many things that come from a valued, positive experience for all:

- Meaningful, enjoyable social interactions and positive relationships.
- Opportunities for language development.
- Opportunities to share, make choices and take turns.
- A developing independence.
- Confidence and self esteem.
- A sense of belonging.



10 Top Tips for Snack and Mealtimes

- Encourage and support children to prepare food at snack and mealtimes, including chopping, peeling and spreading as well as laying the table, serving themselves and clearing away.
- Position any food children cannot serve themselves where they can see it and in a way they can indicate what they would like.
- Make the environment calm, attractive, inviting and accessible to all.
- Use developmentally appropriate cutlery, crockery and utensils to make preparation, self service and self feeding easier.
- A balance needs to be found between respecting others and waiting for them to finish eating and insisting children sit for long periods of time waiting.
- Snack and mealtimes are essential and valuable parts of the day. Organised well, they will enrich the children's day and promote learning opportunities.
- Practitioners sit with children, sharing the same food and drink, modelling healthy eating whilst encouraging and supporting interesting conversation.
- Ensure that food on offer each day is varied, balanced and healthy and is a sensible, age appropriate portion size.
- Support children to understand the importance of hand washing by modelling before preparing and eating food.
- Know your children and families; be aware of allergies, intolerances and cultural and religious food requirements and customs.

What does the atmosphere, environment and provision look and feel like for children today?



10 Top Tips for Talking

- **Be on the same level as the child**
Sit next to or near to share the snack/mealtime experience.
- **Notice and encourage ALL children's attempts to communicate**
This could be a gesture, a look or words.
- **Watch and listen**
Watching what the child is interested in and listening carefully to what they say.
- **Use a clear, lively and animated voice**
It will enthuse and motivate children to communicate.
- **Match your language levels to the child's**
If a child understands/uses 2 information carrying words you do the same eg Child: "butter on my toast" – Adult: "mmm milk in my cup".
- **Follow the child's lead**
Let them lead where the conversation is going and support their communication to sustain it and include others if appropriate.
- **Copy what the child says and correct mistakes by modelling**
Copy their word or phrase or model back what they say eg "I cutted it" – "yes you cut the potato with your knife".
- **Extend the child's language**
Add one extra word to their phrase eg Child: "I got peppers!" – Adult: "mmm, you've got yellow peppers".
- **Use more comments than questions**
Label what the child is doing/eating or comment on what the child is doing instead of asking them.
- **Take turns and keep going**
Repeat what a child says and add a comment or use a gesture to indicate they can take another turn to keep the conversation going.

How have you encouraged and supported children's talk today?





Whole Group Snack Time

Whole group snack time allows children to be part of a sociable 'family' occasion.

Children are able to sit down together with their peers and practitioners to experience whole group interactions that may not occur at any other time of the setting's day. Children that are "fussy" eaters may be more likely to try different foods as a result of peer encouragement.

For settings where space is limited, whole group snack time allows for snack to be put out and packed away again and also limits the time a member of staff is managing snack preparation and the snack area.

To organise an effective whole group snack time remember:

- Ensure equality of access and participation for all at every snack and mealtime. Practitioners should plan for and support children's individual needs in partnership with parents/carers.
- Minimise the interruption to children's play by only tidying up the necessary area so that play is preserved and can be returned to.
- It is a valuable opportunity to develop children's communication and language skills therefore the practitioner(s) should encourage conversation and high quality positive interactions (see 'Top 10 Tips for Talking'). Practitioners should be mindful of less confident communicators and think about positioning and how best to support them in a group situation.
- Children need to wash and dry their hands as independently as appropriate and understand why they are doing this. Preferably do this in small groups or have an activity to engage the children while they are waiting. A skilled practitioner may use this valuable time to count, sing, learn rhymes or have meaningful conversations with children in a relaxed, informal way.
- A good atmosphere is more likely to result if children are not seated too closely together. Consider using more than one table to ensure everyone has enough space.
- When practitioners sit together with the children (at least one per table) they are able to model good manners whilst being mindful of cultural differences such as using fingers or sitting on the floor.
- Practitioners sharing the same food and drink will also model and reinforce positive messages.

- Children will benefit greatly from being able to do as much as possible for themselves, even in a larger group of children, such as simple food preparation, self serving, clearing up and wiping spills.
- ‘Special helpers’ can help lay the table for the whole group and can take part in general food preparation.
- Remind children to only touch what they would like and help them understand the right amount to take. (‘What makes a portion?’ pg. 15)
- The duration of snack and mealtimes will be dependent on the number of children, the number of practitioners supporting and the level of children’s participation in preparation and clearing away but should last no longer than 30 - 40 minutes and children should be eating ideally for no longer than 20 minutes.
- A balance needs to be found between respecting others and waiting for them to finish eating and insisting children sit for long periods of time waiting. Well managed snack times and mealtimes will not feel rushed or too long.
- During snack/meal time practitioners that are not joining children can be deployed to replenish/refresh resources in the play space to ensure that children return to exciting play possibilities and ensure their previous play has been preserved.
- Remember the ‘3 + 2 Rule’ – 3 meals and 2 snacks per day, ensuring you offer at appropriate times, allowing approximately 2-2 ½ hours in between eating.
- Find a way to observe and monitor children’s likes and dislikes of what is on offer to inform future provision.



Free Flow Snack Time

Free flow snack time allows children independent choice about when they stop playing, creating longer opportunities for uninterrupted play and when they would like a drink and something to eat.

It can create opportunities for less confident children to interact and communicate more, either 1:1 with the practitioner(s) supporting the snack area or within a small peer group.

To organise an effective free flow snack time remember:

- Ensure equality of access and participation for all at every snack and mealtime. Practitioners should plan for and support children's individual needs in partnership with parent.
- Set the snack area up away from the main play space and ensure it is supervised by a practitioner at all times.
- Children can choose to come to the snack area whenever they want to during the timed session.
- Remember the '3 + 2 Rule' – 3 meals and 2 snacks per day, ensuring your offer at appropriate times, allowing approximately 2- 2 ½ hours in between eating.
- The snack area should be open for 30 - 40 minutes. It is important that 'grazing' is not promoted and that children are ideally eating for no longer than 20 minutes.
- It is a valuable opportunity to develop children's communication and language skills therefore the practitioner(s) should sit at the same table with the children to encourage conversation and high quality positive interactions (see Top 10 Tips for Talking).
- The practitioner should model good manners whilst being mindful of cultural differences such as using fingers or sitting on the floor.
- Children need to have the snack time system clearly explained and be continually supported so that they understand it.
- Children need to wash and dry their hands as independently as appropriate and understand why they are doing this.

- Children should be encouraged to choose and prepare their own snack - peeling, chopping and spreading rather than picking from a pre-prepared selection.
- Remind children to only touch what they would like and help them understand the right amount to take. ('What makes a portion?' pg. 15)
- Children are able to select and clear away their crockery and utensils and wipe up spills independently.
- Find a way to observe and monitor children's likes and dislikes of what is on offer to inform future provision.



What shall we give them?

A healthy balanced diet for 1-5yr olds is based on **4** food groups:

1. Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods
2. Fruits and vegetables
3. Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
4. Milk and dairy.

Each group provides different key nutrients so it is important to combine foods from all four groups at **every snack and mealtime** to ensure children get the correct balance they need across the day.

When planning food provision you need only consider these 4 food groups. Food from the 5th food group (food and drink that is high in fat and sugar) holds very little nutritional value, providing children with empty calories and very few essential nutrients.

Children will get the necessary sugar and fat they need from natural sources as well as those found within cooking methods and recipes/food items that make up balanced meals across the day, eg:

- Fats and oils in cooking methods, eg margarine/butter in sandwiches or on toast
- Sugar in breakfast cereal, yoghurt, baked beans etc
- Butter and sugar in baking.

Puddings are likely to be the biggest source of fat and sugar. Ideally they will be homemade and contain fruit, milk and/or cereals (flour, rice) too, eg rice pudding, apple crumble or fruit fool and custard. However the traditional recipes should be adapted to cut down the amount of sugar suggested and include fruit instead for sweetness.

Salt

Young children's kidneys are not fully developed and cannot excrete excess amounts of sodium, which may accumulate and cause harm.

- **Babies should not consume any salt.**
- **1 – 3 year olds - no more than 2g of salt (0.8g sodium) per day.**
- **4 – 6 year olds - no more than 3g salt (1.2g sodium) per day.**

Note: Salt and sodium are not the same. If a food label only provides an amount for sodium, to convert to salt, multiply the amount of sodium by 2.5, for example 0.4g sodium = 1g salt.

When purchasing food items and following recipes, it is useful to keep in mind the following sugar, fat and salt guidance:

- Low sugar is considered less than 5g per 100g
- Low fat is considered less than 5g per 100g
- Low salt is considered less than 0.3g per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)

Snack Provision

Every snack offered across a day must include more than one food group. Offering only fruit/vegetables may not provide children with enough energy needed at regular bursts throughout the day.

Balanced, main meals will contain all the sugar and fat necessary in a child's diet. Therefore it is important that all snack provision contains food and drink from the 4 main food groups only.

To achieve this nutritional recommendation, it is best to avoid the following:

Processed/purchased sweet foods including:

- ✗ Cakes
- ✗ Biscuits
- ✗ Rusks
- ✗ Sweet muffins
- ✗ Cookies
- ✗ Flapjacks
- ✗ Pastries
- ✗ Cereal/muesli bars
- ✗ Processed dried fruit products - bars, wafers, flakes etc.
- ✗ Chocolate products or chocolate coated products
- ✗ Yoghurt coated products
- ✗ Sweet popcorn
- ✗ Sweets of any kind

Sweet drinks including:

- ✗ Squash
- ✗ Flavoured water
- ✗ Flavoured milk drinks
- ✗ Fruit juice*

*Fruit juice can be counted towards 1 of children's 5 a day but only if offered diluted and at mealtimes not at snack. However, it cannot substitute nutrients and fibre that come from other fruit and vegetables and can only be counted as 1 portion regardless of how much is drunk. It may also fill a child up which can mean they consume less of other food groups on offer in their meal. Fruit juice consumption fosters and reinforces a sweet tooth, making it harder for children to accept water. Water is vital for health and will be the only drink on offer when children go to school.

Our recommendation is to offer water and milk only.

Salty foods including:

- X** Crisps/potato shapes
- X** Rice crackers
- X** Salted popcorn
- X** Processed vegetable savoury snacks eg carrot puffs
- X** Savoury biscuits eg cheesy crackers/biscuits
- X** Flavoured rice cakes eg marmite

Some snack suggestions:

- ✓** Breadsticks, hummus dip with pear.
- ✓** Wholemeal toast, soft cheese and cucumber.
- ✓** Oatcakes, apple chunks and cheese.
- ✓** Mini rolled tortilla wraps with ham and soft cheese and strawberries.
- ✓** Rice cake and sliced banana.
- ✓** ½ cheese topped crumpet with halved cherry tomatoes.
- ✓** Mini pittas with tuna (tinned in water or brine) with sweet corn (tinned without added sugar or salt).
- ✓** Toasted teacake with olive based spread/butter and melon.
- ✓** Bagel with cream cheese mixed with red and yellow pepper.
- ✓** Vegetable and cheese kebabs, great for children to make their own from a selection of vegetables and cubes of cheese.
- ✓** Mini pizzas, children top ½ a muffin with some tinned tomatoes, grated cheese and a selection of vegetable toppings eg sweetcorn and peppers.
- ✓** Smoked mackerel pate – tinned or smoked fillets blended with cream cheese with chopped vegetables for dipping.
- ✓** Homemade falafel with plain yoghurt and cucumber dip.

When planning food provision it is important to take into account individual children's dietary and cultural needs.

Sharing and appreciating food from different cultures can enrich children's experience of diversity.

What makes a portion?

		9 – 24 months	2 – 3 years	3 – 5 years
2 - 3 portions per day	Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein	Examples of a portion: ½ -1 tbsp finely chopped meat or fish 1 egg 1 tbsp baked beans	Examples of a portion: 1½ tbsp chopped meat or fish 1 fish finger 1 egg 1-2 tbsp baked beans	Examples of a portion: 1 slice of meat 1 piece of fish 1 egg 1-2 fish fingers 2 tbsp baked beans
5 or more portions per day	Fruit and vegetables	Examples of a portion: ½ small apple or pear 1 small plum 1 small slice of melon 2-3 strawberries or chopped grapes Examples of a portion: 1 tbsp soft or mashed vegetables eg carrots, courgettes or broccoli	Examples of a portion: ½ apple or pear 1 small plum 1 slice of melon 4-5 strawberries or chopped grapes Examples of a portion: 1-2 tbsp vegetables 1 small salad	Examples of a portion: 1 small apple or pear 1 plum 1 slice of melon 6 strawberries or chopped grapes Examples of a portion: 2-3 tbsp vegetables 1 small salad
3 - 4 portions per day	Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods	Examples of a portion: 1/2 -1 slice bread 1 tbsp mashed potato or rice 1 tbsp porridge or cereal	Examples of a portion: 1 slice bread 1-2 tbsp mashed potato, rice or pasta 1-2 tbsp porridge or cereal	Examples of a portion: 1 slice bread 2-3 tbsp mashed potato, rice or pasta 2-3 tbsp porridge or cereal
2 - 3 portions per day (no more than 1 pint / 600mls milk each day)	Milk and dairy foods	Examples of a portion: 3 dice-sized pieces of cheese 2 tbsp yogurt or custard 1 cup full fat milk (from 12 months)	Examples of a portion: 4 dice-sized pieces of cheese 3 tbsp yogurt or custard 1 cup full fat or semi-skimmed milk	Examples of a portion: 5 dice-sized pieces of cheese 1 small carton yogurt 1 cup full fat or semi-skimmed milk

This table has been adapted from HENRY (Health, Exercise, Nutrition in the Really Young)

“Is there any more?”

If a child asks for seconds then generally this is okay but there are things to consider:

- Make sure first portion sizes are as recommended for the age of the child.
- Offer vegetables and carbohydrates as seconds rather than other food group items; if a child doesn't want these then they maybe aren't still as hungry as they think.
- As with everything, all children are different, appetites and energy needs are individual to each child so knowing your children will be important when determining servings.
- Use common sense when a child is asking for more as to whether there is a real need or a habit for eating too much. Some children in this age group do not always register that they are full and will overeat if given the opportunity.
- The size of the second helping is important, a whole second 'meal' is too much but an offering is acceptable to top up their intake.

“I don't want that but I want my pudding!”

- It is important not to give or reinforce the opinion that pudding is better than the main meal on offer as this will instil that it is much more attractive. Therefore it is best not to use pudding as a treat over other foods, steer clear of rewarding children with pudding if they eat other things.
- It is difficult if a child is a food refuser and wants pudding straight away. In this case encouraging certain things to be tried first or a certain amount attempted before giving dessert. Talk to parents/carers about consistent strategies for this if it is a regular issue.



Food Group Planner

Use for Snacks and/or meal planning

	Fruit and vegetables	Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta	Milk and dairy	Meat, fish, eggs and non dairy proteins
Monday AM				
PM				
Tuesday AM				
PM				
Wednesday AM				
PM				
Thursday AM				
PM				
Friday AM				
PM				



Responsive Feeding

- Sit down together with time, space and without distraction.
- Sit face to face or at right angles to the baby/child.
- Create a positive atmosphere, smile, focus on the baby/child and enjoy their company.
- Encourage the baby/child to explore the food and feed themselves where possible. This gives them some power and helps to prevent conflict.
- Pace the meal – feed at a moderate pace to ensure they have time to chew well and swallow.
- Pause between mouthfuls; wait for baby’s signals that they are ready for more.
- Respond to baby’s fullness cues – ie baby slows down eating pace, turns head, arches away, spits food back out, easily distracted from eating, pushes food/spoon away, plays with food, clenches mouth shut, shakes head, tells you “no more”. Ignoring such signals can result in overfeeding.
- Gently praise and encourage the baby/child for trying new foods, eating independently etc.



Encouraging Children

Good menu planning provides opportunities for a range of food to be presented to children in a variety of ways, often giving them the chance to try food that they may not have experienced before.

It is important here to consider that helping young children understand that fruit and vegetables (or other healthy foods) are a normal meal and snack accompaniment is **often more important** than the amount children are actually consuming each time they are offered them.

When introducing children to new foods it is important that they have the chance to try the same food on more than one occasion. The first time they try a food it can be the fact that it is new or that they do not like the texture that makes them not want to eat it. The second time they try it, it is not so unfamiliar and their preferences may change. Offering the same foods, cooked or presented in different ways will increase the chances of acceptance. The more exposure to a food the more children are likely to develop a taste for it.

As we know, children learn through play and this is no different when learning about food. Food play that has been carefully planned is very beneficial. A variety of fruits and vegetables for children to investigate enables them to handle, explore and discuss. Role play using real fruit and vegetables is far more interesting than plastic food and helps to make children more familiar.

Being involved in the preparation of meals and snacks can also help children to become used to different food so that when they come to eat they already have an understanding of what is presented. Letting children choose what they would like to eat, from a healthy selection encourages confidence and independence.



How to create better eaters

Children often go through periods of fussy eating or refusal, it's a great way of asserting independence! Keep parents/carers well informed and work together on strategies to use at home and in setting to ensure consistency.

- Children are more likely to eat if they see others eating the same, modelling from both other children and practitioners will support this. Sit reluctant eaters next to good ones!
- Offer new foods alongside well known favourites.
- Be positive, praise good behaviour and ignore the bad.
- Food can be very powerful; children will quickly learn that by refusing food or a particular food they get attention. Praise all efforts however small - that's where the focus should be.
- Start with small amounts, large portions can be off putting, particularly when food is unfamiliar.
- Make food as appealing as possible; consider the size of food offered and the colour mix on the plate. Make food fun, "you're eating a forest of trees!" (Broccoli)
- Offer children the opportunity just to taste, lick or bite but not swallow new food. Offer a tissue to spit it out in if they don't want to eat it.
- Regular and repeated opportunities to try new foods results in better acceptance, 10 – 15 tastings may be required.
- Remove food after a reasonable period of time if the child is refusing to eat it. If a child stops eating, try once to encourage them to eat a little more, if not, take it away without comment.
- Ideally mealtimes should take 20 – 30 minutes, particularly if the child is playing with it and not eating.
- Remember that children can fill up on fluid which dulls their appetite. Avoid letting them do this before a meal.
- Remember to be consistent, patient and try not to show concern if they will not eat.

Best avoided

- Never force a child to eat or demand that they clear their plate of everything. This encourages power struggles and can teach them to ignore their own fullness cues.
- Don't offer something different if a meal is refused.
- Don't overly fuss if children are messy or need support with table manners, one thing at a time!
- Don't withhold pudding if the main meal is not eaten, this reinforces that sweet food is more appealing and will most likely result in the opposite effect – making the pudding even more desirable and the meal less so.
- Don't use food as a reward, bribe or comfort for the same reasons as above.
- Avoid confrontation.
- Don't discuss eating or issues around eating in front of the child.



Allergies

The Early Years Foundation Stage Welfare Requirements state that:

“Providers should obtain, record and act upon information from parents/carers about a child’s dietary needs.”

These details will aid menu planning when thinking in terms of identified allergies and special dietary requirements.

This information must be disseminated to **all** staff as well as included in the induction of new staff. Procedures must be in place to ensure, for example, that visitors to the setting are unable to give children food/drink that they shouldn’t come into contact with.

More and more, settings are providing a high proportion of food and drink during the week and as they are encouraging children to eat different varieties of food, children may often be eating something for the first time. Settings should be aware of exactly what children are eating and when in case an allergy is triggered for the first time.

There are many symptoms of a food allergy, some are mild reactions and some can be more severe including a rash, itching of the mouth, wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, diarrhoea and sickness, swelling of the lips and tongue. These can occur immediately after eating or coming into contact with an allergen or some time after.

A First Aider should always be on hand to deal with all medical emergencies; you should ensure that allergic reactions are covered in paediatric first aid training. In some cases, an allergy can be severe and possibly **cause anaphylactic shock**; a child will have difficulty breathing, possible collapse and in extreme cases could die. **If you suspect anaphylaxis, dial 999 immediately for medical assistance.**

If you think a child could be suffering from an allergic reaction contact parents/carers immediately. Write down what they have eaten and when, the reaction that occurred and anything else that might be relevant in assisting with a diagnosis. Expert medical advice should always be sought when dealing with children and allergies.

The following is **not an exhaustive list** but gives examples of some foods that can trigger food allergies and where they can be found:

- Peanuts - in sauces, cakes, desserts, groundnut oil, peanut flour
- Nuts (eg almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashew nuts, pecans, pistachio nuts, macadamia nuts and queensland nuts) - in sauces, desserts, crackers, bread, ice cream, marzipan, ground almonds, nut oils.

- Milk - in yoghurt, cream, cheese, butter, milk powders, foods glazed with milk. Certain brands of crisps.
- Eggs - in cakes, mousses, sauces, pasta, quiche, some meat products, mayonnaise, foods brushed with egg.
- Fish - in some salad dressings, pizzas, relishes, fish sauce and some soy and Worcestershire sauces.
- Shellfish - prawns, mussels, scampi, crab, oyster sauce, shrimp paste.
- Sesame seeds - in bread, breadsticks, tahini, hummus, sesame oil.
- Soya beans/Soya - as tofu or beancurd, soya flour and textured soya protein, in some ice cream, sauces, desserts, meat products, vegetarian products.
- Celery - including celery stalks, leaves, seeds and celeriac, in salads, soups, celery salt, and some meat products.
- Lupin (common garden plants, related to legumes such as peas, lentils and beans) - lupin seeds and flour in some types of bread and pastries.
- Gluten - in cereals such as wheat, rye and barley and foods containing flour, such as bread, pasta, cakes, pastry, meat products, sauces, soups, batter, stock cubes, breadcrumbs, foods dusted with flour.
- Sulphur Dioxide - in meat products, fruit juice drinks, dried fruit and vegetables.
- Mustard - including liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds, in salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries and some meat products.
- Tomatoes - sauces, pre-prepared meals, pizza.
- Citrus fruits - sauces, desserts.
- Wheat and other cereals - foods containing flour, such as bread, pasta, cakes, pastry, meat products, sauces, soups, batter, stock cubes, breadcrumbs, and foods dusted with flour.

The above is taken from “Food allergy, What you need to know” Food Standards Agency November 2007

With thorough data collection on registration of a new child, settings will be armed with the information of existing allergies. This information should be referred to at all times when planning menus and serving food/drinks to children.

It must also be clear to all other adults within the setting to ensure children are not able to access what they are allergic to either by being given it by someone unaware or being able to access it or come into contact with it when unsupervised.

Both parents/carers and the setting can work together to make sure they know and recognise all the different names for an allergen. Staff ordering and preparing food must be vigilant about reading all ingredients of bought products, as well as changes in suppliers and items marked “new recipe” on packaging for example.

Many processed and pre-prepared foods contain a variety of ingredients. Ensuring that the majority of meals and snacks are prepared and cooked from scratch wherever possible will help settings know exactly what children are eating. Kitchen procedures must ensure cross-contamination management.

When ordering, buying, storing and preparing food and drink remember:

- **A**llergen aware, are all allergen names known by the setting?
- **L**ook for cross contamination risks
- **L**ots of communication between all parties involved
- **E**mergency procedures must be in place
- **R**eviews of products and suppliers to ensure safety of ingredients
- **G**ood suppliers and delivery controls
- **E**nough effective staff training and cascading of information
- **N**otices as reminders and identification of children at risk.

Providing for children with allergies can be challenging but it is important to ensure that they still receive a balanced and nutritious diet.



Food Safety and Hygiene

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states:

“Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. Those responsible for the preparation and handling of food must be competent to do so.”

“Providers should be aware of their responsibilities under food hygiene legislation including registration with the relevant Local Authority Environmental Health Department.”

“In group provision, food hygiene matters should be included and on-the-job training which is available to all staff involved in the preparation and handling of food”.

Each setting must think carefully about how they evidence that these requirements have been met. The first statement **must** be complied with. Level 2 Food Safety is available in a variety of ways, including on line and can help you ensure that the requirement is met.

All settings providing any food and drink, including small snacks and drinks, need to be registered as a food business with Environmental Health.

As good practice, settings should keep records of their food production and preparation activities. Settings with a small number of staff or those who do not provide cooked meals can use their own methods. Others could adapt elements to suit from the “Safer Food, Better Business” packs, a practical toolkit developed to help put in place food safety management procedures to assist in complying with food hygiene regulations. These can be ordered from Food Standards Agency Publications and have a pack specific to Childminders as well as general food businesses that group based settings come under.

The following is not an exhaustive list or a replacement to training but is offered as a quick reference for settings to refer to.

Hand washing

Always wash your hands thoroughly; it is key to reducing contamination and infection. Wash them:

- Before preparing food.
- After using the toilet.
- After blowing your nose or sneezing.
- After every break.
- After touching pets.

- After emptying the bin.
- After touching raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish.

How to wash your hands

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Put one dose/squirt of soap into a cupped hand.
- Wash for 15-20 seconds vigorously and thoroughly without adding more water.
- Ensure you wash palm to palm, back of hands, between fingers, fingertips, thumbs and wrists and nails.
- Rinse thoroughly with warm running water.
- Dry thoroughly.

When working with food

- Cover cuts with a brightly coloured waterproof dressing.
- Remove all jewellery.
- Keep long hair tied back.
- Avoid sneezing or coughing over food.
- Use a clean utensil every time food is tasted.
- Wear an apron and take it off when leaving the kitchen and returning to children.
- No smoking.
- Avoid touching hair and face.
- No eating or drinking.

To avoid cross-contamination

- Thoroughly clean all utensils.
- Have separate chopping boards for raw and cooked foods.
- Keep pets away from the kitchen area whilst preparing food.
- Cover food that is left sitting out to prevent contamination.

In the fridge/freezer

- Keep food covered.
- Place raw foods at the bottom of the fridge to prevent any juices dripping.
- Never place hot food in the fridge. Cool food quickly and thoroughly before storing.
- The fridge temperature should be at or below 8°C.
- Keep eggs in the fridge.
- Defrost food thoroughly before cooking, unless the packaging states otherwise.
- Don't store food in opened cans, put into a container, labelling use by dates and ingredients for allergy management.
- Clean the fridge regularly, check use-by dates and throw out any leftovers that are more than 3 days old.
- Always store and serve food at the correct temperature.
- Reheat food to above 75°C. Stir frequently to ensure all the food is equally hot. This is especially important when using a microwave.

Certain foods are more likely to cause food poisoning.

Ensure:

- Chicken is completely defrosted before cooking. Cook thoroughly until juices run clear.
- Cold meat is kept cool.
- Stews and casserole leftovers are cooled quickly and stored in the fridge. Make sure they are reheated to above 75°C.
- Burgers, sausages, pies and similar meat dishes are cooked or reheated until the centre is piping hot. There should be no pink meat in the centre of burgers or sausages.
- Soup, gravy, sauces and custard: These should be kept piping hot until served.
- Leftovers are cooled quickly and stored in the fridge. Do not leave any of these foods sitting at room temperature for several hours or reheat more than once.
- Rice is eaten immediately after cooking. Leftovers should be cooled quickly and stored in the fridge. Leftover rice may be eaten cold or reheated to above 75°C.
- Eggs are stored in the fridge. Do not eat cracked eggs. Egg dishes for the very young should be thoroughly cooked until the yolk is firm.
- Fruit and vegetables are always washed.

“If in doubt, throw it out!”



Moving Forward

The following Snack and Mealtime Audit highlights things to think about in order to develop and ensure high quality practice. It will be useful to reflect on your current provision for snack and mealtimes as a whole staff team.

Share with all practitioners what makes good quality snack and mealtimes and their importance using the information in this guidance. The “10 Top Tips for Snack and Mealtimes” and “10 Top Tips for Talking” in particular will act as useful prompts and reminders.

It may also help when developing practice to look at the “Food and Drink Policy Guidance”, available from Healthy Early Years to ensure that your snack and mealtime ethos is echoed in your policy. This way you will be able to share key messages whilst ensuring consultation with staff, parents/carers and children.

Snack and Mealtime Audit

Environment and routine:

	Ideas for further improvement:	Timescale/responsibility:
How long do snack and mealtimes currently take?		
Are snack and mealtimes valued as important times of the day?		
Are children given plenty of time? Do they seem rushed or do they have to wait for a long time whilst food is served or after eating?		
How are tables organised? Does this promote interaction between children and adults and children and children?		
Are children encouraged to be as independent as possible?		

<p>Do children chop, prepare, serve and pour for themselves at every snack and mealtime?</p>		
<p>Are sufficient health and safety procedures/risk assessments in place?</p>		
<p>Are sufficient hygiene procedures in place?</p>		
<p>Are there sufficient allergy management/individual dietary requirement procedures in place?</p>		
<p>Is there enough age appropriate crockery, utensils and cutlery?</p>		
<p>Do practitioners use the “10 Top Tips for Snack and Mealtimes” as part of everyday practice?</p>		

Interactions and communication:

	Ideas for further improvement:	Timescale/responsibility:
Are there high quality interactions and meaningful conversations between the children and practitioners?		
Do the practitioners support and encourage ALL children to communicate with adults and each other?		
Do practitioners use the “10 Top Tips for Talking” as part of everyday practice?		

Staff deployment:

	Ideas for further improvement:	Timescale/responsibility:
How many practitioners prepare for snack and mealtimes beforehand and how long does this take?		

<p>Can children do more with the practitioners to prepare?</p>		
<p>How many staff support the snack area during free flow snack time?</p>		
<p>How many staff sit with the children during whole group snack time? Is this enough to support independence and interactions?</p>		
<p>Are there enough practitioners to support children with preparing, serving and feeding during snack and mealtimes as well as being able to engage in meaningful interactions?</p>		
<p>How are staff breaks managed to ensure enough staff are with the children at snack and mealtimes?</p>		
<p>Do staff have responsibility to replenish the play space for when the children return?</p>		

Consultation and change:

	Ideas for further improvement:	Timescale/responsibility:
How will changes to routines, food provision and the environment include consultation with and listening to children?		
How will plans be shared with parents/ carers to gather their views?		
How and when will new procedures be introduced to the children?		
How and when will new systems be monitored in order to develop or make changes where necessary?		