

HEALTHY EATING

The early years of a child's life are critically important for the formation of good lifestyle habits, including a positive attitude towards healthy eating. At the centre, we promote and encourage healthy eating. Healthy eating habits started in childhood will stay with your child forever. The choices we have made preparing their menus will influence their chance of a healthier life in years to come. Children grow and develop fast, so they need a high quality, varied diet, with a good balance of energy, protein, vitamins and fibre. Healthy eating is about having a varied balanced diet and enjoying lots of different food. We use a good working knowledge of the food pyramid in preparing our menus.

The Healthy Food Pyramid is a fun way of teaching your children about the different food groups. The pyramid is divided into five shelves, each representing a different food group. Choosing a variety of foods from each shelf ensures that your children have a balanced and healthy diet. You should select most of your children's food from the bottom two shelves of the Healthy Food Pyramid. Smaller amounts of food should be chosen from the next two shelves, while food at the top of the pyramid should be eaten sparingly.

Children in full day care in the centre receive breakfast, 2 meals and 2 snacks.

What are our meals?

Our meals contain at least one serving from each of the four bottom shelves of the food pyramid. Carbohydrate group, Protein group, Fruit and the Vegetable shelf, and Dairy group shelf.

What are our snacks?

Our snacks contain food from at least 2 shelves of the four bottom shelves of the food pyramid i.e. Protein and Carbohydrate, Carbohydrate and Dairy, Fruit, Vegetables and Carbohydrate, Dairy and Fruit/Vegetables.

The following menus have been developed; keeping in mind, any special dietary requirements and special emphasis is placed on being culturally aware. We follow this by involving parents from different cultures to give a demonstration, with the possibility of including this in our menu; this to date has been a huge success.

At the centre, we operate the HACCP system, where there is traceability and accountability, ensuring all food used at the centre is of top quality and presented to our children at quality standards. To ensure this, all staff receives training in food handling, ensuring a quality service for our children. We continually involve parents, staff and children in our menu selection.

Children in our daycare should receive 70% of their daily food in the service. Thus, the importance of our daily food (service) selection.

ENVIRONMENT

The fact that families have brought each of their children to the service is verification of the degree of trust they have in the care provided at the centre. There are families who have been coming to us since the establishment of the facility, ones who have returned to us and of course new families. We value the respect that each family has in us and continually work to maintain and even better our performance. A Home from Home as described by one of our parent is a huge compliment, which all in the centre value.

When creating our Home from Home, parents, staff and children work in a harmonious setting where everyone's input is valued. Staff, parents, and children work together to create a healthy promotion policy, which is visible in the hallway. When drawing up this policy, physical activities, food practice, nutrition practice, dental health and confidence building are all taken into account. It is prepared using the whole school approach; which we evaluate and review regularly.

The physical environment is bright, airy and spacious; it is aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The layout is spacious and its layout is such that it allows free flow for staff and children. There is sufficient space indoors for physical, active

movement and we have a specially constructed Gross Motor Room.

The entrance hall will greet you with its colourful display of our Healthy Incentive Project. Included is our policies, on our whole school, healthy eating policy, menus, physical play, outdoor timetable, hygiene, healthy options and photographic evidence of our children, on view for parents, staff and potential customers.

All of the rooms are laid out with evidence of at least 3 food related materials, which are visible for all to see and experience that healthy eating is not just talked about, it is an everyday experience. Fruit bowls and water stations are in each of the rooms for our children to enjoy.

Outdoors has both man-made and natural surfaces for physical play to allow for agility and enjoyment. Our walks outdoors allows safety and enjoyment for our daily nature walks.

All staff on induction are taken through our policy on our healthy eating incentive. Staff are given formal training on food handling and HACCP, which ensures food reaching our children is of the highest standard. Staff take time to sit with children at meal times and experience different food textures themselves. Staff are involved at every aspect of our project to the drawing up of our menu, timetable for physical play, walk/outdoor time, dental, hygiene and our healthy reward system. Staff present food in such a way, taking into account that we are encouraging children to self-help themselves and to encourage a family style service.

Children

Children attending the centre are encouraged to practice a family style food service, where adequate time is allowed for meal times. Children are encouraged with good hygiene practice of washing hands before meal times, setting the table and serving themselves. Children and staff sit together in a homely style that provides encouragement and confidence to children, to experience new tastes and to feed themselves. Conversation flows, which gives a holistic experience to our environment. Tables have tablecloths and flower dressing to enhance the atmosphere.

ACTIVE LIFE STYLE

“To aid life, leaving it free to unfold itself, is the basic task of an educator.”

The Ethos of the centre is that we want to develop the whole child prospective; where diet, physical play, educational needs and hygiene all take equal importance. We strive to ensure that each child's individual needs are met. It has been said that the more play experience we have as a child will support us in later life. Thus, the importance of ensuring that children have an active outdoor lifestyle.

It promotes:

Healthy weight

Healthy bones

Psychological wellbeing

Helping children to become strong and healthy, develops self-esteem and therefore encourages children to have a go at new activities. Children naturally learn so many skills through play e.g. Communication, socialising, thinking, movement and imitating.

At the centre we are fortunate to have a rural setting, where we have the opportunity for long walks, at least 3 times daily and opportunities to enjoy the nature of the countryside. A timetable has been developed to ensure that children have opportunity for physical play daily (indoor/outdoor.) A Gross Motor room has also been constructed, to support children's play. Rain proof clothing, wellingtons and coat's are available for children on rainy days.

HYGIENE and DENTAL HEALTH

It is the policy of the centre to promote good personal hygiene. All staff act as good role models. Children are encouraged in the practice of washing their hands from an early age. Visual displays are to be seen throughout the centre, on hand washing and good personal hygiene practice. We promote good hygiene practice at meal times, toileting, after exercise and after activities.

At the centre, we promote the policy that the more you look after your teeth the longer you hold on to them. We empower children with the knowledge of being sugar smart and in doing so being kind to their teeth. We promote best drinks for teeth.- milk and water are the best drinks for our teeth, which you can have anytime without damaging your teeth. We support children with usual aids and practical demonstrations on how to keep their teeth clean and we at the centre do not use sweet treats as a reward system, only healthy options e.g. Fruit bowls and cheese boards are available freely to children throughout the day.

Our policy is Healthy Toothy Drinks **Deochanna Sláinliúla d'Fhiacla**

FLUID INTAKE

At the centre, it is our policy to ensure that children attending our service are having enough liquid everyday.

Fluid Rules to be Cool

Having enough liquid everyday is very important for you. Being tired, not able to concentrate or having headaches are all signs that you are not drinking enough. At the centre, we have water stations in each room, visible and accessible for children. Milk and tap water are the drinks offered to children in our service. At least 6 water drinks are offered during the day, milk, and water at meals and snack times.

Studies have shown that drinking lots of liquid improves how children are and how good they are at exercising concentration levels and general wellbeing. We encourage babies from 6 months to drink from a cup without a lid. A cup without a lid is the best chance of encouraging your baby to develop a sipping action when drinking, which encourages speech and language development, independence and sociability.

HEALTHY REWARD SYSTEM

A poster is available in each room.

It is the policy of the centre that there is a healthy reward scheme in operation. Fruit and vegetables are provided as treats during the day. No food from the top of the food pyramid is provided at the centre, as either a reward or an incentive.

Fruit is available in all rooms during the day. In the evening healthy options are available in the hallway for the children to take.