

Preparing a nutrition policy

Developing a nutrition policy is an excellent way to demonstrate your commitment to the children in your care. It also provides an opportunity to ensure that the recommendations and advice about healthy eating are agreed between you and the children's parents or guardians.

Writing a nutrition policy is not as difficult as it may sound. Most childcare providers will have a number of unwritten 'rules' about eating and drinking. Developing a policy is just a way of recording these 'rules' and provides an opportunity for you to discuss healthy eating with parents and how it will apply to their child/children.

A policy may also be useful in cases where parents are providing their own food. It could, for example, be used to agree suitable alternatives should a child refuse the food the parent has provided. A policy should not be seen as fixed, but open to regular review.

Some suggestions about the type of information that could be included in such a policy are outlined below.

Introductory statement

I aim to offer a high quality service to the children I care for and their parents.

I recognise the need to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age to help children to reach their full potential in terms of growth and development.

Meals

- Well-balanced and nutritious meals are provided for the children.
- All puddings provided are based on fruit and/or milk.
- Fresh fruit is always available.
- Processed meat products such as sausages, chicken nuggets, burgers and fish bites, if provided, are limited to once a week.
- Healthier cooking methods are used, eg boiling, grilling, steaming, microwaving, stewing, rather than frying.
- Special diets are respected. Parents will be asked to provide a copy of the diet sheet from a registered dietitian or specific guidance in agreement with the child's doctor.
- Cultural dietary habits are respected. Parents should provide details of these.
- Mealtimes are used as an opportunity to encourage good table manners. For example, whenever possible children and adults eat together.



Snacks and drinks

- Snacks provided are healthy and nutritious.
- Sweets and fizzy drinks are not routinely offered.
- Where possible, snacks are sugar-free to avoid causing damage to teeth.
- Fresh fruit is regularly offered as a healthy snack.
- Whole milk or water is provided for children as a drink between meals.
- If juices and squashes are given, these are well-diluted and only given at mealtimes to avoid causing damage to teeth.

For more ideas of what could be included see sections on *Snacks and drinks* on pages 13–14 and 29–30.

Rewards and special occasions

- Praise and attention are used to help develop children's self-esteem and to act as a positive reward for good behaviour.
- If other forms of reward are used, they do not conflict with the healthy eating principles that are in everyday use. For example, sweets and sugary drinks are not given as rewards.
- On special occasions the focus will be on the occasion rather than providing fatty or sugary foods or drinks.

For more ideas of what could be included see *Rewards and celebrations*, page 36.

Activities

A healthy lifestyle is promoted through a variety of activities including active play, outings, cookery, stories, music, etc.