

09 Early years practice procedures

09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes (older children)

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

Snack times

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager e.g. picnic on a blanket.
- Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- After the age of two, children move to semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, as long as they are eating a varied and balanced diet.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds, but are sliced into 'sticks' to minimise a choking hazard.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Biscuits should not be offered, but toast, rice cakes, bread sticks or oatcakes are good alternatives.
- Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough. Children are not made to leave their play if they do not want to have a snack.
- Staff sit with the children and join in conversation encouraging independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

Mealtimes

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
- Cloths are used where practical.
- Lunchboxes are placed on the tables.
- Children wash their hands and sit down.
- Children are encouraged to start their lunch with a healthy choice e.g. sandwiches or fruit.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are only encouraged to try new foods slowly.

- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
- Staff are expected to model healthy choices of food/drink if eating/drinking in front of the children e.g. not drinking fizzy drinks.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parent's notice board, including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
 - Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens