



HEALTHY EATING

The importance of healthy eating for young children is widely recognized. It promotes healthy growth and development and a feeling of wellbeing.

A child care provider's role is to ensure that the children receive nutritious meals, learn good eating habits and develop healthy attitudes toward food.

That isn't an easy job! Planning nutritious menus that provide variety can be challenging. Children can be fussy about what they eat and mealtimes can sometimes be hectic.

The *Healthy Eating* section will look at:

- **Infant Feeding – The First 12 Months** (including breastfeeding, alternative milks and introduction of solid foods)
- **Feeding Preschoolers - The 1-6 Crowd** (Toddler/Preschooler nutrition)
- **Planning Healthy Menus**
- **Allergy Alert**
- **Vegetarian Diets**
- **It's Snack Time**
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- **Included Resources - Web links**
- **Sample Menu Based on Canada's Food Guide**
- **Menu Checklist**
- **Guidelines for Meal and Snack Choices**
- **Sample Feeding Philosophy**



INFANT FEEDING – THE FIRST 12 MONTHS

Infants grow rapidly, tripling their weight and gaining half of their height in the first year of life. For this reason, they have a greater need for calories per pound of body weight, than adults. Infants have small stomachs and need to be fed frequently – “on demand” when they indicate that they are hungry.

Good nutrition is key in infancy to meet both body growth needs and brain growth which is rapid until age two and continues until age 6!

Young babies are only able to swallow, digest and get the nutrition they need from milk. Although breastmilk is the ideal milk for infants, not all mothers choose or, are able to breastfeed. Iron-fortified infant formula is recommended for infants who are not breastfed or for infants receiving formula as well as breastmilk. Even after 6 months when they are able to eat solid food, breastmilk and formula remain a key source of nutrients. Solid foods provide needed nutrients, textures and exposure to a wide variety of flavours that may help with food acceptance later in childhood.

Instructions from Parents

It is important to obtain written instructions from parents concerning the type, amount and schedule of feedings for their infant. Review relevant details with each infant’s parents to confirm their instructions. Remember to update the instructions with the parents regularly.

It is important to have written instructions with the parents’ signature and the date.

Depending on the set up in your centre/home, you may use one of a variety of methods to obtain these instructions:

You may wish to use a log book. Each time there is a change in the instructions; the parent would write it in the logbook, sign and date it.

Some centres already use a communication form that is sent home with the parent every day and returned, signed, the following morning. This form could include information on type, amount, and form of food and feeding schedule. It should also include a space for signature and date.

When food or drink is supplied by a parent of a child in attendance the container for the food or drink should be labeled with the child’s name. Foods brought from home should be stored in the refrigerator (if necessary).

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the optimal way to feed infants. Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first 6 months of life with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate solid foods to two years and beyond.



Child care providers can support breastfeeding women and their babies to continue breastfeeding. Staff can work with the mother to find the approach that works best for her and her baby. For example: a staff person can offer the nursing mother a comfortable chair and space for nursing. Another suggestion is for staff to feed the baby expressed breastmilk from a bottle or cup as directed by the parents. (see *Supporting Breastfeeding in Childcare* handout for more information)

Storage of Breastmilk

If you have a mom who is expressing breastmilk for a healthy full-term infant at home, this is the safe way to store breastmilk, using the following guidelines:

- Store in a sealed container or freezer bag (made for storing milk)– clean glass or hard plastic containers that are BPA free are recommended.
- At room temperature: 3-4 hours
- Cooler with a freezer pack: 24 hours
- Fresh milk in refrigerator: 3 days
- Thawed milk in refrigerator: 1 day
- Freezer that is inside a refrigerator: 2 weeks
- Refrigerator freezer (separate door): 3-6 months
- Deep freezer: 6-12 months

Using Stored Breastmilk

Frozen breastmilk can be thawed in the refrigerator and used within 24 hours. When ready to use, place container under warm running water to bring to room temperature. Shake gently to mix then test a drop of warmed breastmilk on your wrist. It should feel warm but not hot.

Frozen breastmilk can also be thawed in a bowl of warm water for five minutes and used as soon as possible after warming. If it has not been used within an hour it should be thrown out. Thawed breastmilk should not be refrozen. Breastmilk should not be reheated in a microwave oven. Leftover breastmilk should be thrown out after a feeding.

Alternate Milks

When breastfeeding is not chosen or possible then cow's milk based, iron-fortified formula is recommended for infants until 9 to 12 months of age.

Soy-based formulas are only recommended for those infants who cannot take dairy-based products for health, cultural or religious reasons, such as a vegan lifestyle. Specialty formulas are only recommended for infants with a detected or suspected disease or health issue.

Whole or homogenized pasteurized cow's milk may be introduced at 9 – 12 months of age and continued throughout the second year of life. Whole cow's milk should only be introduced at 9 months of age if an infant is eating 12 tablespoons of a mixed diet including a source of vitamin C and protein each day.



Partly-skimmed 2%, 1% and skim milk are not routinely recommended in the first two years of life. Soy (except soy formula), rice or other vegetarian beverages are not appropriate substitutes for breastmilk or formula or pasteurized whole cow's milk in the first 2 years.

Preparing Formula

Preparing your space and equipment:

1. Clean your countertops and hands with soap and warm water and a clean cloth or paper towel.
2. Sterilize bottles, nipples, and spoons by boiling in an open pan of water for two minutes.
3. Allow them to air dry and cool. Cover them with a clean tea towel if you're not going to use them right away.

Mixing

- Follow the instructions on the formula label. Never add extra formula, water or cereal.
- Health Canada's recommendations for the safest practice for preparing Powdered Infant Formula (PIF), depends on the child. For **pre-term and low birth-weight infants** under two months of age or immuno-compromised infants (more prone to serious infections and/or complications than a healthy infant), water used for preparing PIF should be brought to a rolling boil and cooled to no less than 70°C before adding the powder. For **all other infants (healthy)**, previously boiled water that has been cooled to room or body temperature (37°C) can also be used to prepare PIF.
- Boil water for 2 minutes. Do not use a kettle that shuts off before the water has boiled for 2 minutes. Let cool. Boiled water can be stored in the fridge for 2-3 days in a covered sterilized container.
- If you are making powdered formula for a baby that is ill or less than 2 months old and premature or low birth weight – use the water within 30 minutes.
- If you are making powdered formula for a healthy, full-term baby you can let the water cool to room temperature.

Powder

- Pour the exact amount of boiled cooled water needed for each feeding into bottles.
- Add the correct number of level scoops of powder to the water. The scoop comes with the powdered formula.
- Place nipples and tops on the bottles. Shake well to mix.
- Refrigerate it and use within 24 hours.



Liquid Concentrate

- Wash the top of the formula can.
- Shake the can well and open.
- Pour into the clean measuring container. Add an equal amount of boiled, cooled water. Stir. Pour into bottles. Add nipples and tops.
- Refrigerate and use within the time noted on the label.

Ready-to-Feed

- Shake the can well before opening. Wash the top of the can, open and pour into the bottle.
- Refrigerate opened cans of ready-to-feed formulas and use within 24 – 48 hours.

Warming the bottle

1. Remove the formula from the fridge. Re-warm and use it right away, because bacteria can grow at temperatures above 4°C.
2. Place the formula in a bottle warmer or a pan of warm water for no more than 15 minutes. The longer you warm it, the greater the chances that bacteria might grow.
Note: Do not use a microwave oven. The uneven heat can create "hot spots" that can burn your infant's mouth.
3. Always check the temperature of the formula on the inside of your wrist to make sure it isn't too hot.
4. Within two hours, always discard any unused portion of your infant's prepared formula left after a feeding. However, do not encourage an infant who is not hungry to finish a bottle. This will encourage overfeeding. Discard the leftover formula

Storing formula

- Store unopened cans away from heat or light.
- Check the expiry date and discard outdated infant formula.
- Store the prepared formula in the fridge. You can store it for up to 24 hours at 4°C. Any formula left over after 24 hours should be discarded
- Don't leave prepared formula at room temperature for more than one hour.
- Do not freeze.

How to Bottle Feed

Infants should always be held when fed from a bottle in a comfortable and calm setting. The baby's head should be held higher than the rest of his body, so the milk doesn't flow into his inner ear and cause an infection. It is a good idea to switch sides when feeding baby with a bottle as this helps promote eye development. The bottle should be tipped so that the milk fills the nipple and air doesn't get in. It is important to follow the baby's lead and wait until the baby stops eating before burping her.



Infants must be allowed to stop bottle feeding when the baby show signs of being full such as closes lips, stops sucking, spits out the nipple, turns head away, covers mouth with hand, cries or bites the nipple. Bottles should not be given to an infant to go to sleep.

This table is ONLY A GUIDE for the amount of formula to prepare. Every baby is different.

Baby's Age	Bottles each day	Amount in each bottle	Total Amount in 24 hours
0 - 2 months	6 – 10	2 – 4 ounces (60 – 120 mL)	Up to 23 – 27 ounces (700– 800 ml)
3 – 5 months	6 -7	5 – 6 ounces (150 – 180 mL)	Up to 35 ounces (1,050 mL)
6 -8 months	5 – 6	6 – 8 ounces (180 – 240 mL)	Depends on amount of solid foods baby eats
9 - 11 months	3 - 4	5 – 6 ounces (150 – 180 mL)	Depends on amount of solid foods baby eats

Source: Manual of Clinical Dietetics, 6th Ed, American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada, 2000.

Solid Foods

Infants are physically and developmentally ready for new foods, textures and ways of feeding at about 6 months of age. It is important to remember that infants should always be supervised during feeding.

Following Baby's Lead

- Being sensitive to hunger and fullness cues from infants can help caregivers avoid over or underfeeding infants.
- Hungry infants often cry, move their arms and legs excitedly, swipe at the spoon holding food, open the mouth, and move the head towards the spoon. They may also coo, smile and gaze at the food provider during feeding to signal a desire for feeding to continue.
- Infants that are no longer hungry may fall asleep, become fussy, slow the pace of eating, become distracted, play with or throw food, want to leave the chair or refuse to eat.

When to Feed

Your baby is ready to start eating solid food when s/he:

- Is around 6 months old
- Holds head up



- Sits up in a high chair
- Opens mouth wide when you offer a spoon of food
- Turns her face away if she doesn't want the food
- Closes her lips over the spoon
- Keeps food in her mouth

What to Feed

- Breastmilk is all babies need for around the first six months of life. If families are not breastfeeding it is recommended that they serve iron-fortified formula as their milk choice for the first six months of life.
- Infants require a source of iron (other than breastmilk or iron-fortified formula) around 6 months of age. To prevent iron deficiency, iron-rich foods such as iron-fortified infant cereal or pureed meat are recommended as the first foods.
- Infants need to be gradually exposed to more texture (from pureed to mashed to lumpy) in foods when they are learning to chew (from 6 to 10 months). Caregivers can control the amount of texture in infant food if the food is homemade.
- It is recommended that around six months, caregivers introduce single-ingredient foods first, one at a time, at three to five day intervals, and watch for adverse reactions.
- Combination foods may be given to older infants after they have tried each food individually without an allergic reaction.
- Fruit juice should be limited to 4 oz (125 mL) in a child-size cup beginning around 9 months of age (juice is not necessary as children can get the liquid they need from their milk source and water. Only unsweetened, pasteurized, 100% pure fruit juice should be offered. This juice can be diluted.
- By 1 year of age infants should be eating a variety of foods from the four food groups (Canada's Food Guide) and drinking liquids from a cup (except breastmilk).
- It is important to ensure that the safety seal on an unopened jar of baby food has not been broken by listening for a "popping" sound when opening the jar. If the "popping sound" is not heard, you should not use the food in the jar. As well, do not feed baby food directly from the jar or original container unless the whole amount will be eaten. The spoon will carry germs back into the food. Open jars of baby food can be kept covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

What about Allergies?

- Your baby is more likely to have an allergy if one or both parents have allergies, asthma or eczema.
- There is little risk to introducing foods after the age of 6 months, including those foods that are more commonly allergenic. Therefore, the following foods are safe to introduce after the age of 6 months – grains, vegetables, fruit, meat, meat alternatives, whole eggs, sesame, soy, nuts, peanuts and cow's milk products. However, it is important to keep in mind that some of these foods most notably nuts are a choking hazard in the early years.
- Watch for allergic reactions when you offer new foods.



FEEDING A BABY (The below examples will vary depending on the child they are only to be used as a guideline)
 Toronto Public Health Dept

	0-6 months	6 months	6-7 months	7-9 months	9-12 months
Breastmilk	8-12 feedings Breastmilk Or 5-10 feedings of iron fortified formula 24 – 36 ounces 720 – 1050 mL	4 -7 feedings Breast milk or iron fortified formula 24 – 40 ounces 720 – 1200 mL	3 -4 feedings Breastmilk or iron fortified formula 18 – 28 ounces 525 – 900 mL	3 – 4 feedings Breastmilk or iron fortified formula 18 – 28 ounces 525 – 900 mL	3 – 4 feedings Breastmilk or iron formula, whole milk 18 – 21 ounces 525 – 675 mL
Cereal	None	Enriched rice, barley and oatmeal. Mix with breastmilk, formula or water. Feed cereal from a spoon. 1 -2 tbsp. twice daily.	All plain varieties of commercial enriched, boxed infant cereal, 3 – 5 tbsp. twice daily.	Enriched infant cereal; if you give home made cereal and whole milk talk to your doctor or dietitian about baby's iron needs. 4 – 5 tbsp. twice daily. Dry toast.	Enriched infant cereal, Cream of Wheat, other plain hot cereals, bread, noodles, spaghetti, rice.
Vegetables	None	None	Strained, cooked vegetables – dark yellow, green or orange; 1 – 2 tbsp. daily	Cooked mashed vegetables or Junior Vegetables 2 – 4 tbsp. daily	Diced cooked vegetables 4 – 8 tbsp. daily.
Fruits	None	None	Strained cooked fruits, very ripe banana mashed 1 – 2 tbsp. daily	Soft fruits, mashed or junior fruits 2 – 4 tbsp. daily.	Fresh fruits, peeled, seeded and diced. Canned fruits packed in water or juice, diced. 4 – 8 tbsp. daily
Fruit Juice	None	None	None	Diluted fruit juice may be given from a cup; not more than 4 oz. daily. Mix juice with the same amount of water.	Diluted fruit juice – give from a cup; not more than 4 oz. daily.
Protein Foods	None	None	None	Egg yolks (hard cooked, softened with water) Creamy, lean meat, fish and chicken, cooked and strained 4 – 8 tbsp. daily.	Egg yolk (hard cooked), mild cheese, goat cheese, plain yoghurt (not less than 3.5% fat), chopped or minced beef, chicken, fish 4 – 8 tbsp. daily.

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FEEDING PRESCHOOLERS – THE 1-6 CROWD

Healthy eating is important for preschoolers to:

- provide them with energy and nutrients needed to grow, develop and be active;
- develop a sense of taste, acceptance and enjoyment of different foods;
- develop attitudes and behaviors to help them adopt healthy eating habits for life.

Healthy eating means:

- Choosing foods according to Canada's Food Guide.
- Eating foods that provide important nutrients.
- Limiting low-nutrient foods that are high in salt, fat, sugar and caffeine, such as chips, chocolate, candies and pop.

How you feed is as important as what you feed. The following division of responsibility in feeding is key to helping children develop healthy feelings towards eating.

- Caregivers are responsible for **what, when and where food** is presented to eat and the manner in which it is presented.
- Children are responsible for **how much** and even **whether** they eat.

To help preschoolers enjoy their meals:

- Serve simple foods that are easy to eat, suited to their cultural and personal preferences.
- Encourage staff, parents and children from various cultures to share their food experiences and share recipes to consider for using on special food days
- Include some finger foods.
- Choose foods that can be served separately on a plate more often than mixed dishes.
- Present food in attractive, fun and interesting ways by using foods of different colours, shapes and flavours.
- Introduce new foods in small amounts. Children are more likely to eat a familiar food and it may take 10 exposures before a child actually eats a food that is new.
- A child should never be forced to eat a specific food. Children who are forced to eat may lose touch with their body's natural appetite control system. This can lead to eating problems.
- Preschoolers need time to explore, touch and taste food, and to learn how to use utensils.
- If a child seems to take too long to eat, his or her plate can be removed without a fuss after a reasonable amount of time (20-30 minutes).
- A child refusing to eat a meal every once in a while is not a concern as long as the child is growing normally.
- Staff should eat with the children and encourage the use of age appropriate table manners/behaviors.



- Staff can discuss the food, where it comes from, how it was prepared, how it makes them feel.
- Staff can involve children in preparing food, setting the table or growing food as much as possible i.e. tear lettuce, stir batter, etc.

PLANNING HEALTHY MENUS

Preschoolers can meet their nutrition and energy needs by following the eating pattern outlined in Canada's Food Guide (see How to Build a Healthy Preschooler). The amount of food preschoolers need depends on their age, body size, activity level, growth rate and appetite. Preschoolers can eat the same kinds of foods as adults but usually eat smaller servings.

The following amounts (in table below) should be available to each child between ages 1-6 years old in attendance for 6 hours or more per day.

Food Group	Total Amount Required to Offer Per Day	Example Serving Sizes
Vegetables and Fruit	2-2 ½ whole fruits or 250 - 300 ml of cooked or raw vegetables or fruit	½ - 1 medium vegetable or fruit ¼ - ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit ¼ - ½ cup 100% juice
Grain Products	1 ½ to 2 ½ slices or 175 - 450 ml	½ - 1 slice bread ½ - ¾ cup cereal ¼ - ½ cup rice or pasta
Milk and Alternatives	250 - 375 ml	½ - 1 cup of milk 25-50 g (1-2 oz) cheese 1/3 - ¾ cup yogurt
Meat and Alternatives	75 g (2 - 3 oz)	25 - 50 g (1-2 oz) meat, fish or poultry 1 egg 50 - 125 mL (¼ - ½ cup) cooked beans or lentils 50 - 100 g (¼-1/3 cup) tofu 15 - 30 mL (1 - 2 tbsp) peanut butter or pea butter



General Tips For Menu Planning

- Include foods from each of the four food groups.
- Uses child size-servings.
- Balance higher fat choices with plenty of lower fat vegetables and fruit.
- Include a variety of colours, flavours and shapes.
- Serve whole grain products more often than white flour or refined products e.g. whole wheat bread or rolls or tortillas, bran or oatmeal muffins, cereals made with whole wheat, bran, shredded wheat or oats.
- Limit juice to 4 oz per day and serve it as part of a meal or snack.
- Serve unsweetened 100% fruit juice or water instead of fruit drinks, beverages, punches or flavoured crystals.
- Puree, grate, cook or finely chop hard vegetables and fruits for children under three years old.
- Milk can be used in puddings, soups and hot cereals.
- Offer leaner meat, poultry and fish, eggs, as well as cooked dried beans, peas and lentils more often.
- Use margarine, butter and salad dressing in moderation.
- Limit sugar, syrup, and sweets.
- Limit salty foods and use high salt seasonings and condiments in moderation and only after tasting.
- Balance higher fat foods with lower fat foods e.g. when serving a high fat food such as pepperoni pizza serve it with vegetables and fruit.
- Low fat diets may not supply enough energy or nutrients for growing children and nutritious higher fat foods such as peanut butter and cheese can help children meet their energy and nutrient needs.
- High fat foods that are low in vitamins and minerals (e.g. chips, cookies, cakes, French fries) fill children up and can decrease their intake of more nutritious foods.

Steps to Build a Menu

Menu plans for the current and following week must be posted in a visible place. Also the Day Care Nurseries Act outlines that any substitutions made must be noted on the posted menus. This will help parents plan menus at home to complement their child's day care meals. It is a good idea to make up menu plans in advance, usually in four to six week sequences. Many cooks use different cycles for the four seasons.

1. Use the menu planning form included at the end of this chapter.
2. Select your meat or alternate for lunch (i.e. fish, eggs, lentils, poultry, pork or beef)
3. Select the vegetables. Remember to include both cooked and raw. Include a variety of colours, vary forms and textures also. (i.e. grated, chopped, sliced etc.)
4. Select fruit and fruit juices. If you choose to include juice at meal time, remember to include milk at snack time or in a main dish.
5. Add whole grain breads, cereals, rice or pasta.
6. Add milk, milk products or alternatives (e.g. fortified soy beverages)



7. Choose morning and afternoon snacks making a point to include foods from all four food groups for the day's snack.
8. Remember to consider food preparation equipment and timing when deciding on menu items to be served on the same day.
9. Now use the one day menu as a guide for the four other weekdays.
10. Look for feedback from parents and children and make additions or deletions as needed.

For detailed menu planning tips see the Menu Planning section at Eat Right Ontario for a personalized menu plan including recipes and a grocery list at www.eatrightontario.ca/en/menuplanner.aspx or refer to Meals without Squeals (see resource list).

Choosing Recipes

Canada's Food Guide encourages adults and children to eat more whole grains, fruit and vegetables and to choose foods lower in fat more often. Recipes that offer high nutritional value that are easy to prepare, and produce a product that looks and tastes appealing make the best menu choices.

Before placing an item on the menu, check the recipe for:

- Fat content – does it have oils, shortening, butter, margarine and how much compared to other ingredients? Does it contain trans fat?
- Salt content – choose recipes with little or no salt.
- Are the main ingredients foods from the four food groups?
- Are instructions clearly written and easy to follow?
- Is the recipe easy to prepare?

For Dietitian approved recipes visit the recipe section on www.eatrightontario.ca and www.dietitians.ca or go to the Healthy Happy Kids E-bulletin page for kid approved nutritious recipes in the archives at www.tbdhu.com

ALLERGY ALERT

Allergies

Food allergies are reactions of the body's immune system to a food protein that is found in a food or an ingredient in a food. Allergies can range from runny noses to life threatening anaphylactic reactions. Severe allergic reactions affect primarily the skin, upper and lower respiratory systems, the gastrointestinal system and the cardiovascular system. Common food products that cause reactions are peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy, fish, wheat, eggs, milk and seafood.

Foods such as peanut butter, nuts and shellfish are of special concern because small amounts can cause a severe anaphylactic reaction and potential death within minutes. It is important to avoid preparing and serving these foods in your day care when an allergic child is present.



Intolerance

Food intolerances (also known as sensitivities) are adverse reactions to a food that do not involve the immune system. Common foods that cause food intolerance can include sulphite agents, dairy products or monosodium glutamate. For instance, children with lactose intolerance cannot absorb the lactose in dairy products. Symptoms include stomach ache, bloating, gas or diarrhea.

Preventing a Reaction

An **Allergy Risk List** with the child's name and allergy-producing food(s) needs to be:

- Dated
- Kept up-to-date
- Posted in visible places (i.e. kitchen and serving/eating area)
- Communicated to staff that serve and supervise children during meals/snacks

This list can be expanded to include children who may have special dietary needs such as a food intolerance, vegetarian diet etc.

- When in doubt about a food, don't serve it to a child with allergies.
- Obtain as much detail from the parents as possible about allergy-producing foods and the child's reaction to them. Arrange for parents to provide their own substitute foods when it is the safest alternative.
- You may want to discourage outside food being brought in for special occasions in order to eliminate potential allergens being introduced.
- Having written detailed recipes is very useful to prevent unknowingly giving a child a food that may cause an adverse reaction.
- At times, simple substitutions can be made so that a separate portion can be prepared for a child with allergies.
- Do not pick out allergy producing foods from a dish and serve the dish to the child. Traces of foods such as tomato, corn or egg, may be left behind and could cause a serious reaction
- If after discussions with parents you have any concerns about their instructions, you can consult with the Dietitian at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. Call 625-8813.
- If a child is sick after eating, detailed information describing what he/she ate and drank and the symptoms – such as vomiting, diarrhea, skin rash, or a respiratory problem can aid in the diagnosis of an allergy.
- Ensure that children do not share their food with one another.
- Children with allergies should be clearly identified (medic-alert bracelets, badges, etc.) Some facilities put children's pictures up in the kitchen out of public view but as a reminder to staff.
- Have a system to label the food for children with allergies (certain bowls, labels, etc.) so that it is distinct from other children's foods.
- Incorporate special dietary or feeding arrangements with the written instructions of the parent.
- Be familiar with foods that potentially contain allergens that must be avoided and know what ingredient to avoid on labels.
- Be familiar with your day care's written policy/procedure explaining the actions to follow during an allergic reaction.
- Regularly visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website (www.inspection.gc.ca) to check for allergy alerts.



Beware of the following circumstances that may lead to an allergic reaction in one of the children attending day care:

- Cross contamination
- Improper cleaning and sanitation
- Lack of knowledge on the part of the food handler/server about ingredients and seriousness of food allergies
- Unwillingness to check food ingredients
- Improper labeling of products/ingredients

VEGETARIAN DIETS

Vegetarian diets are more and more common and there may be a vegetarian child coming to your day care. Vegetarian diets may be adequate for preschoolers only if their diet:

- Includes foods from each of the four food groups (i.e. instead of meat substitute with tofu, cooked beans, peas and lentils etc.)
- Includes milk products or alternatives that ensure they are getting enough calcium and vitamin D
- Provides enough energy (calories), protein, iron, calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B12 and riboflavin

If you have questions regarding planning a balanced vegetarian diet for preschoolers contact a registered dietitian at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 625-8315 (see The Vegetarian Infant and Child handout).

IT'S SNACK TIME

Snacking is important for children throughout the day because they have small stomachs and high energy needs. Children may not have had a sufficient meal before coming to day care. It is therefore, important to provide healthy snacks that are both nutritious and do not contribute to dental decay.

Offer a variety of snacks that include nutritious foods from at least 2 of the 4 food groups e.g. ½ pita bread cut into triangles with 30 mL (2 tbsp.) hummus and water or an oatmeal muffin with 125 mL (1/2 cup) apple and banana slices and water. Snacks should be offered 1-2 hours before meals so they don't interfere with meals.

While snacks are necessary, it is useful to remember:

- Snacks offer nourishment and satisfy hunger and thirst between meals. They should not be used to entertain or reward children.
- Serving juice only once a day and limiting the amount to 125 (4 oz) is recommended. Water is a great choice when children are thirsty.
- Snacks that won't harm children's teeth are best (this includes sugary and sticky foods).

Involving children in preparing and serving foods enhances children's socialization, self-help and language skills. It also encourages a positive attitude toward a wide variety of foods.



CHOKING PREVENTION

Young children, under 3 years, vary in their chewing and swallowing abilities. To make foods suitable for children at different stages of development it may be necessary to adjust the way foods are presented.

Modifying some of the foods served to children under 3 years old can prevent choking. For example, foods that are round or sticky can block a child's airway. The shape and texture of a food can make it difficult for a young child to get it into his/her mouth, chew it and swallow it without frustration.

If food is too difficult to eat, the child may give up on it, thus not getting the benefit of the nutrients it contains and making the eating experience an unpleasant one.

Tips to Prevent Choking

- Cut wieners/sausages lengthwise into strips, then cut them into bite-size pieces;
- Remove pits, seeds and peel from fruit and cut into bite-size pieces;
- Cut grapes in quarters or in half
- Cut raw vegetables into narrow strips or grate them;
- Spread smooth peanut butter thinly on crackers or bread and do not allow it to be eaten off a spoon
- Avoid giving popcorn and hard candies

Children must always be supervised and sitting down when eating.

INCLUDED RESOURCES

- Supporting Breastfeeding in Child Care
- Feeding Your Baby – From Six Months to One Year
- Feeding Your Toddler
- How to Build a Healthy Preschooler
- Healthy Eating Habits Start at Birth
- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide
- The Vegetarian Infant and Child

Meals Without Squeals by Christine Berman and Jacki Fromer. 1997. Available at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and from Communities Together for Children Early Years Centre.

Website Links

Feeding Your Baby from 6 months-1 year.

<http://www.beststart.org/resources/nutrition/index.html>

Breastfeeding Matters

www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding/pdf/breastfeeding_matters_eng_fnl.pdf

Eat Right Ontario www.ontario.ca/eatright

Canada's Food Guide www.canadasfoodguide.net

Dietitians of Canada www.dietitians.ca

Last Updated August 2011



Menu- Based on Canada's Food Guide

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
MEALS SNACK					
LUNCH					
SNACK					
Recommended Number of Servings a Day for 2-3 Year Olds	Vegetables & Fruits: 4 Grain Products: 3 Milk and Alternatives: 2 Meat & Alternatives: 1				

*Refer to Canada's Food Guide and the Day Care Nurseries Act for more detailed information.

Last Updated August 2011



MENU CHECKLIST

- ☐ Menu has some variety in:
Colour, Texture, Shape, Temperature, Flavours, Preparation Methods
- ☐ Snacks and meals are planned using Canada's Food Guide
- ☐ Whole grain products are served often
- ☐ Raw fruits and vegetables are served often
- ☐ Finger foods are included
- ☐ A good source of vitamin C is served daily
- ☐ A good source of iron is served daily
- ☐ Most of the foods are familiar to and enjoyed by most of the children
- ☐ Some foods are new; some are familiar foods prepared in a different way
- ☐ Snacks and meals are dentally acceptable (not sugary or sticky)
- ☐ Higher-fat foods are balanced with lower-fat foods
- ☐ Snacks fill in nutritional gaps in the main meals
- ☐ Cultural, ethnic and religious preferences are considered
- ☐ Substitutions are planned for children with allergies or special diets
- ☐ Holidays, birthdays, field trips, and special events are planned
- ☐ Expensive foods are balanced with less expensive foods
- ☐ Adequate time is available to prepare menu items



GUIDELINES FOR MEAL AND SNACK CHOICES

FOOD GROUP	SERVE EVERY DAY	SERVE SOMETIMES
GRAIN PRODUCTS	Whole grain breads Whole grain muffins Whole wheat crackers Whole wheat Pita bread Whole wheat Tortillas Unsweetened cereals Whole wheat Pasta Brown and Wild Rice	Granola cereals Fruit loaves/cakes Homemade cookies Fruit crisps/cobblers Enriched white bread/ rolls
VEGETABLES AND FRUIT	Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables 100% fruit juices Unsweetened canned fruit Vegetable juices Baked and mashed potatoes	Homemade French fries Dried fruit Frozen fruit juice bars Sweetened canned fruit
MILK AND ALTERNATIVES	Milk * Plain yogurt Part-skim cheese Milk-based soups Cottage cheese	Milk puddings Frozen/sweetened yogurt Chocolate milk Milk shakes Eggnog
MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES	Lean beef, poultry, pork Fresh or frozen unbuttered and canned fish Cooked dried beans, peas, lentils Eggs Peanut butter Unsalted nuts and seeds	Ham Sausages Luncheon meats, cold cuts Pepperoni sticks Fried chicken and fish

- Whole milk is recommended for children under 2 years of age.

SERVE LEAST

Granola bars	Canned puddings	Popsicles/Freezies	Jello
Pies/Pastries	Pop	Chocolate	Cakes
Cookies	Donuts	Chips	Cheesies
Wieners	Ice cream	Sweetened cereals	



Sample Nutrition Philosophy

We believe that good nutrition is a basic right of every child. Our nutrition policies reflect our commitment to ensure that the children's nutritional needs are met in a positive, nurturing manner with respect for individual needs and preferences of the children and their families.

Adapted from Meals Without Squeals, Fromer and Berman 1997

Sample Nutrition/Feeding Policy #1

Little Children DayCare directors and staff believe that snacks and meals will be served in a warm home-like atmosphere. We will seek to develop an appreciation and respect for the food itself, where it was grown and produced, as well as for those who prepared it.

Objectives

1. To provide healthy, high quality food that is as close to its natural state as possible.
2. To serve meals and snacks that take into account the various food groups and food colours.
3. To provide food that minimizes the use of unnecessary chemicals and additives.
4. To provide food that minimizes the use of packaging.
5. To provide food that maintains the natural health of the land and livestock and that minimizes the impact on the environment.
6. To provide, whenever possible, food that is grown locally and that supports the local economy.
7. To support, whenever possible, farmers and food suppliers who practice and support the objectives listed above.
8. To encourage the families who use our services to continue these practices in their own lives.
9. To become a model for other daycares who may also be seeking to improve the lives of the children and families they serve through good nutrition and ecological consciousness.

Adapted from Thunder Bay Little Lions Daycares



Sample Policy #2

To ensure consistency and guideline's for feeding procedures.
Our Child Care centres adhere to Ellyn Satter's division of responsibility in feeding.

PROCEDURE

Feeding demands a division of responsibility:

Adults are responsible for what, when, and where food is provided to children.

1. We provide nutritious, regularly scheduled meals and snacks. Meals and snacks are an important part of our program day.
 - We take time to help children relax and prepare to eat.
 - We sit and eat with the children and have a good time.
 - We help children learn to behave well at meal and snack times.
2. We follow provincial guidelines to plan meals and snacks.
 - Our menus are planned to adhere to the Day Nurseries Act and follow Canada's Food Guide
 - We keep in mind the special food needs of small children. (e.g. allergies, vegetarian diets, cultural etc.)
 - We offer familiar and popular foods as well as unfamiliar foods
 - We allow children to eat what they like and also try out new foods.
3. We follow healthy eating guidelines for cooking to ensure the foods we serve are high in nutrient content but not high in sugar, trans and saturated fat, and sodium.
 - We use meat, poultry, and fish (exception in programs where fish allergies exist) as well as cooked beans and other legumes.
 - We use lean red meats but do not restrict red meat.
 - We serve whole or 2% milk and a variety of dairy products.
 - We provide salad dressings, butter and /or margarine in moderation.
 - We serve a variety of fruit, vegetables and whole grains.
 - Our menus are reviewed by a Registered Dietitian.



Children are responsible for how much and whether they eat.

4. We trust children to manage their own eating. Children will eat what they need, and they will learn to eat the new foods that we offer:
 - We let children pick and choose from the food we make available.
 - We let children eat as little or as much of the food as they want.
5. Some days children eat a lot, other days they don't eat as much. They know how much they need.
 - We do not limit the amounts children eat.
 - We do not force children to eat certain foods or certain amounts of food.

Adapted from City of Thunder Bay Municipal Childcare Centres