

## NUTRITION POLICY

### **1. TITLE**

#### **NUTRITION POLICY**

### **2. SCOPE**

The policy applies to all those working on site including students and volunteers

### **3. PURPOSE**

Parafield Gardens Children's Centre promotes good nutrition and safe, healthy eating habits in a supportive environment for all children attending the centre. Early childhood is an important time for establishing lifelong healthy eating habits. Healthy eating has both short and long term benefits for children. In the long term it minimises the risk of diet related chronic diseases later in life, such as heart disease, strokes, some cancers, and diabetes.

### **4. POLICY DETAIL**

#### **WHAT TO BRING**

#### **4.1 Snack time**

Snack time is part of the morning routine and children are free to also have an afternoon snack if they choose to. Parents and carers should send fresh fruit, vegetables, or dried fruit for snacks for the following reasons:

- To provide children with important vitamins and minerals
- To encourage a taste for fruits and vegetables and promote healthy eating habits
- To avoid children pressuring parents and carers to buy and provide other less healthy foods they may see other children having.
- To encourage chewing which promotes good oral muscle development
- To lower the risk of poor nutrition

*If a child cannot eat fruit and vegetables at snack times, staff will discuss a plan around this with the involvement of a health practitioner through a specific diet plan*

#### **4.2 Lunch Time**

Parents/carers should pack a variety of healthy foods to help the children meet their nutritional requirements for the day. Parents and carers will receive handouts from time to time with guidelines and ideas for healthy lunches to meet some of the daily nutritional requirements. Lunches should be nutritional food that children normally eat at home that is consistent with their culture. As Parafield Gardens Children's centre encourages healthy food choices, parents and carers are asked to avoid foods including high in fat, sugar, and salt in children's lunch boxes for the following reasons:

- Children will often choose less healthy options before healthy options.
- Children who do not have 'treats' in their lunch box may become 'envious' of less healthy foods they see other children eating, i.e., peer pressure.
- Healthy eating habits are easier to model if all children are doing the same thing

- Foods that are high in fat/sugar/salt contribute to short- and long-term health problems such as dental issues, high cholesterol, obesity, and high blood pressure. Such foods are discouraged as 'everyday' foods
- Foods that are high in fat/sugar/salt are low in important nutrients needed by children to meet their daily nutritional requirements for good growth and development. If these foods are eaten at the expense of more nutritious foods, children will miss out on important vitamins and minerals.

#### **4.3 Examples of healthy lunches**

- Whole grain and wholemeal breads/wraps
- Fillings on sandwich wraps such as cheese, salad, chicken, egg
- Whole grain rice dishes
- Cold rolls
- Sushi
- A range of fresh fruits
- Baked beans in a container
- Rice crackers and cheese
- Rice and tuna
- A cold pasta salad
- Chicken salad
- Naan bread, pita bread, roti, chapati

#### **4.4 Examples of foods that should not be brought to the centre**

Parents and carers are requested not to provide the following foods and drinks for snack time and lunch time:

- Sugary sandwich spreads e.g., honey, jam, chocolate spread, hundreds and thousands
- Any form of chips or salty packet foods such as Twisties or Burger Rings etc.
- Popcorn which can be a choking hazard
- Muesli bars
- Roll ups, fruit straps, fruit metres etc.
- Chocolates
- Lollies
- Soft drinks, cordials, flavoured mineral water and milk drinks
- Fruit juice, fruit box
- Biscuits, cakes, buns, pastries, chewing gum
- Nuts and nut products (e.g. .Nutella, peanut butter)
- Chocolate desserts/yoghurts. .

#### **4.5 Introducing solids/young children**

**Children** who have bottles of formula/milk etc. and pureed food should consult with the occasional care coordinator about what to bring. If a child requires infant formula or breast milk, a parent/carer will bring the necessary number of bottles (already made up) to the centre each day. A parent may also choose to come back and breastfeed the child. When it is time for children to be introduced to

solids, staff will work with the parent around nutritional choices until the child is old enough to engage in 'crunch and sip' time.

#### **4.6 Nut aware centre**

Some children (or family members) can have a life-threatening allergic reaction to nuts and nut products including peanut butter, Nutella and muesli bars. Sometimes just touching a bowl with a nut product can trigger a reaction. For this reason, *no food* with nuts or traces of nuts can be brought to the centre and children will not be permitted to eat any food with nuts or traces of nuts. In this instance a parent will be phoned to request an alternative food and if they cannot be contacted or cannot bring this then food will be provided to the child. The centre considers it is '**Nut Aware**' as opposed to 'nut free' as it is not possible for staff to control what is brought to the centre, as it is possible that food with nuts is brought, and staff are unaware it has nuts or traces of nuts.

#### **4.7 Drinks**

Children bring a bottle filled with water each day and it is refilled as needed. There are no other drinks at the centre.

#### **4.8. Mealtimes**

Lunch and snack times are social events for the children where they can eat together and talk to one another and where positive eating habits are encouraged. If child finishes lunch quickly before everyone else, the child may be encouraged to stay and talk to their friends for a short time and then choose a quiet activity. Food and mealtimes are viewed as a learning experience and part of the curriculum.

#### **4.9. Communication with parents about food intake**

Staff send home food not consumed by the child so that the parent/carer is aware of the amount of food eaten. If there are any concerns about eating during the day staff communicate with the parent/carer. Staff will provide parents/carers with information on any inappropriate foods sent to the centre through a communication sheet as a reminder of foods that should not be brought to preschool or occasional care.

#### **4.10. Curriculum**

The centre will promote nutritional foods through the curriculum and from time to time might engage in a specific nutrition program. On occasions 'sometimes' food will also be part of the curriculum. The centre staff will not provide rewards for nutritious foods eaten so parents should not bring less healthy options to encourage healthy eating.

#### **4.11. Individual dietary requirements**

If a child has a food allergy or cannot eat fruit or vegetables, an individual plan from a health professional is required before the child starts the centre.

#### **4.12. Cooking at the centre**

The centre cooks/prepares food with children from time to time as part of the curriculum. Vegetarian options are always available and processed meals and ham/pork products are not given to children. The centre will promote food with high nutrition when providing food. The only exception to this is a special event such as an end of year party which is part of the 'sometimes'

food learning or occasional cooking linked to a topic of learning which could be around 'sometimes' foods.

#### **4.13. Functions at the centre**

The centre will cater for vegetarian, cultural and religious preferences if food is provided for a parent function. If the centre is providing food the ingredients of the food will normally be displayed. Outside of enrolled hours it is parent's/caregiver's responsibility to monitor what their children eat (for example at a family function if parents bring their own food). There may be additional cost for some functions involving food for families.

#### **4.14. Food brought to the centre**

Parents supply all nutritious food for the day/season for their children. If food is supplied that is not nutritious, if the food has nuts or traces of nuts, if there is insufficient food for a child or a child will not eat the food provided by parents, the staff will normally try to contact the parent. If staff are unable to contact the parent, and a child is hungry the centre they may provide food for the child. If this occurred more than once there would be a cost to the parent.

Staff will encourage children to eat the nutritious food that is packed but parents/carers should be aware that at times children may not be hungry and may want varied quantities of food at different times. Staff cannot insist children eat food. If a parent is concerned about the amount of food a child eats at preschool or occasional care, the parent should seek a health professional to support the child.

#### **4.15. Nude Food and how to pack food**

Parafield Gardens Children's Centre promotes a Nude Food approach. Packaging of any type is not permitted. This means yoghurt or other foods normally in packaging should be in a reusable container. It is important parents do not take non nutritious foods out of packets and pack in containers. All containers need to be reusable as part of the centre sustainability program. Snack and lunch should be packed separately in different containers. Food needing refrigerating should have an ice brick and all lunches should be in an insulated bag with your child's name on it.

#### **4.16. Parent communication**

If a parent or guardian has any concerns about their child's eating, please speak with staff prior to enrolment.

*Approved by Governing Council Date; 9 December 2022. Date of review: November 2025.*

*This policy was developed with consideration of Department of Education requirements and recommendations, National Regulations, Australian Dietary Guidelines, Get Up and Grow and Right Bite information.*