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Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A Meeting children's eating needs**
- 1B Involving children in healthy eating activities**

Promoting healthy eating

Healthy eating is not just about providing healthy foods and making sure children eat them. The environment that is set up for eating plays a huge part in how children feel about mealtimes, how they participate in eating activities, and how they learn to understand their bodies and their needs.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
✓	Quality Area 2: Children’s health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
Early Years Learning Framework		My Time, Our Place
Principles		
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
✓	Learning through play	Learning through play
✓	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
✓	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
✓	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	



Setting the table

Children under five years are exploring foods and learning to use their utensils. The children and the floor may become messy during mealtimes. Choose a setting where any mess is easy to clean up. If you are in an area that cannot be easily cleaned, place a tablecloth or sheet under the eating area. Think about this first, and act to prevent issues so that you and the children are relaxed and able to enjoy the mealtime.

Your consideration of the setting also includes how it will be presented. Indoor and outdoor picnics are fun and loved by children. Brightly coloured blankets or log chairs make a picnic even more enjoyable.

Consider how the table is presented. Use different ideas to keep the children interested. Use a variety of items; for example, coloured tablecloths, flowers, napkins, music or a menu, and have children self-serve at the table or from a buffet. Move to different parts of the room or set up tables outdoors.



Furniture

Highchairs, tables and chairs are the logical choices for mealtime furniture. Ensure that children are comfortable. Infants should be strong enough to hold their heads upright and sit unsupported. Toddlers should be stable in their chairs or not too tight in a highchair. Children should be able to sit at the table comfortably with their bodies at the right height for the table.



Utensils

Safety is vital when choosing utensils, but practice allows children to gain skills. If you select utensils made specifically for children, their design should allow the children's skills to develop.

Utensils must suit the ability of the child and must also match the types of foods provided; for example, children who are served peas may find that they roll off a spoon, but they can spike them with a fork.

Infants may need to be spoon-fed by an educator, but will also benefit by holding a spoon at the same time. This gives them practice and encourages them to feed themselves.

Alternative utensils, such as chopsticks for older children (you can find easy-to-use ones that are joined together), can be fun and a great way to introduce cultural alternatives.



Clothing

Bibs and napkins are useful for catching or wiping up mess. Encourage parents to provide children with clothing that allows them to practise all their skills with little anxiety about spots and stains. Children may be worried about getting nice clothes dirty. Keep a change of clothes handy if needed.

Edible art	Provide opportunities to create edible art. Children love creative activities, so consider letting them serve their own foods from a selection and create a plate of art for lunch. Alternatively, take a little extra time to put food on the plate so it looks like a face, caterpillar or rainbow. If you do an internet search for 'food art images', you will find endless ideas to try.
Talk about the food groups	Have children create plates of food in different food groups. This could be part of their mealtime or during an activity. You can purchase or make a plate that demonstrates the food groups and the serving size that is appropriate for each. The <i>Australian guide to healthy eating</i> demonstrates these servings as a poster: http://aspirelr.link/healthy-eating-guide-aus
Supermarket catalogues	Collect supermarket catalogues and look at the different foods. Talk about healthy foods that we should eat all the time, and foods that we should only eat occasionally, as they are not healthy for our bodies. Create collages, use the pictures to draw a recipe that the children can follow or sort the foods into their food groups.
Try different foods	Introduce new, culturally rich or unusual foods to try, such as star fruit, dragon fruit and lychees. Every group of children will have different ideas about what is a new food. Ask parents for ideas on the types of food they eat at home.
Present your setting in different ways	Have a picnic, create a fancy restaurant theme, set up a buffet or ask children which space they would like to eat in today.
Include books with a focus on food	Books allow you to explore different ways of sourcing foods and alternative meal ideas. Even simple recipe books with photos are great for children to look through.

Keeping involvement positive

Food should never be used as part of a disciplinary measure, and food should never be denied to a child as a punishment. Rewarding children with food – either healthy or unhealthy options – may also result in eating issues and emotional eating.

Example

Handling a fussy eater

Shari is three years old, and is not eating her main course. Harrison, an educator, asks another educator, Mandy, whether he can tell Shari that if she doesn't eat her main meal she won't get any fruit, which is the second course.

Mandy explains that food and drink are not bargaining tools, but are basic needs that must be provided to all children. Mandy shows Harrison how all meals in the centre are nutritionally balanced and provide healthy choices; this includes all parts of the meal. She suggests that Shari be encouraged to eat without making much of a fuss. If she doesn't eat her main meal, she can be provided the healthy option of fruit as a second course.

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans	<p>65g cooked lean red meats such as beef, lamb, veal, pork, goat or kangaroo (90–100g raw)</p> <p>80g cooked lean poultry such as chicken or turkey (100g raw)</p> <p>100g cooked fish fillet or one small can of fish</p> <p>2 large eggs</p> <p>1 cup cooked or canned legumes/beans such as lentils, chickpeas or split peas</p> <p>170g tofu</p> <p>30g nuts, seeds, peanut or almond butter, tahini or other nut or seed paste</p>
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The Australian dietary guidelines encourage you to:

- ▶ provide plenty of drinking water
- ▶ offer sweet and snack foods only sometimes and in small amounts
- ▶ use small amounts of fats and oils.

When using fats, remember that there are good fats and bad fats. Choose the good fats where possible and remember that low-fat diets are not suitable for children under two years.

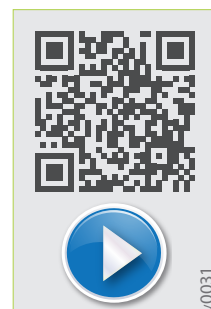
Good fats	Bad fats
Unsaturated fats – found in canola oil, avocado and nut butters/pastes	Saturated fats – found in butter, cream, margarine, coconut and palm oil
Omega-6 and Omega-3 fats – found in salmon, sardines, safflower and soybeans	Trans fatty acids – found in hydrogenated vegetable oil

There are two skills you need to ensure your menu planning and food provision choices are suited to children's dietary needs:

1. Communication with families to determine the expectations they have for their children.
2. Understanding different types of foods, and how to identify and match them to requirements.

Regular communication and sharing of information with families enables you to identify the foods children enjoy or must avoid. Reading food labels is also part of your responsibility of caring for children's health and wellbeing.

Watch this video about planning a menu for children.



The hommus dip nutrition information panel looks like this.

Nutrition information		
Servings per package: 20		Serving size: 10 g
	Quantity per serving	Quantity per 100 g
Energy	138 kJ	1380 kJ
Protein	0.3 g	3.2 g
Fat, Total	2.7 g	27.2 g
Saturated	0.3 g	2.7 g
Carbohydrate, Total	1.9 g	19 g
Sugars	0.1 g	1.4 g
Sodium	0.024 g	0.24 g

When comparing foods to see which is more nutritious, use the 'Quantity per 100 g' panel. Try to choose foods from the 'Preferred foods' column in the following table.

Nutrient	Preferred foods	Sometimes foods	Foods to avoid
Fat	3 g per 100 g or less	3 g to 20 g per 100 g	More than 20 g per 100 g
Saturated fat	1.5 g per 100 g or less	1.5 g to 5 g per 100 g	More than 5 g per 100 g
Sugar	5 g per 100 g or less	5 g to 15 g per 100 g	More than 15 g per 100 g
Salt (sodium)	300 mg per 100 g or less	300 mg to 1500 mg per 100 g	More than 1500 mg per 100 g

Take notice of serving sizes, as the amount of food you provide alters the amount of ingredients included.

Planning a menu

When you are planning a menu, or checking a menu planned by someone else, you should take the following into account.

Guidelines

- ▶ *Australian dietary guidelines*
- ▶ *Infant feeding guidelines*
- ▶ *Australian guide to healthy eating*
- ▶ The policies and procedures of your service

Recipes

- ▶ A wide range from different cultures and lifestyles
- ▶ Both hot and cold meals

2B Providing for individual needs

It is highly likely that some children may have special food requirements. These may originate from:

- ▶ developmental needs
- ▶ individual tastes
- ▶ medical requirements, allergies and/or intolerances
- ▶ cultural origins including racial background, religious beliefs and lifestyle choices.



Developmental needs

Standard 2.1 of the NQS focuses on healthy eating and Element 2.1.3 highlights that food and drink should be provided appropriately for each child. This means that the developmental stage of a child influences how foods are provided. Babies should be fed individually by educators, while toddlers should be supported to feed themselves independently. Older children should be given opportunities to serve themselves and contribute to the menu and choices.

Children of different age groups have different abilities and nutritional requirements. The following table gives you an overview of the developmental changes you will notice.

Age	Developmental changes
Newborn	▶ Reflexes assist them to drink.
6–10 days	▶ Responds to the smell of milk.
1–3 months	▶ Trust develops through holding and being fed when hungry.
3–4 months	▶ Anticipates feeds.
3–6 months	▶ Communicates during feeds.
4–6 months	▶ Reflexes in the tongue lessen, allowing food to be swallowed. ▶ Able to hold their head upright without support. ▶ Can turn away and close their lips if full. ▶ Gets excited when food is being prepared. ▶ Can transfer objects from hand to hand and from hand to mouth.
9 months	▶ Likes to try to feed self. ▶ Likes to play with food. ▶ Able to chew. ▶ Can pick up small objects with fingers, including a spoon and a cup.

Each child is different, so be sure to check for grains that are most suitable.

Obesity

Obesity is diagnosed by a doctor, nutritionist or dietitian when a child is excessively overweight. In children, obesity is usually caused by unhealthy eating and lack of exercise. To support children who are obese, you can provide education to families around healthy eating and work with them to:

- ▶ provide a range of healthy meals and snacks
- ▶ encourage children to be physically active
- ▶ teach children about preferred foods, sometimes foods and foods to avoid
- ▶ treat all children with respect
- ▶ build the self-esteem of all children
- ▶ ensure all children receive enough nutrition throughout the day
- ▶ focus on children's interests and strengths.

Underweight children and nutritional deficiencies

Underweight children and nutritional deficiencies occur due to either a lack of adequate healthy foods or as a result of a medical condition. A child who is underweight or who has a nutritional deficiency needs support from a dietitian or nutritionist and medical practitioner to ensure their particular needs are met. The child's family may also need support and guidance to assist with:

- ▶ understanding healthy foods
- ▶ behaviour guidance for children who are chronically fussy or difficult eaters
- ▶ financial access to purchase food
- ▶ access to food stores
- ▶ medical care for the causes and/or outcomes of deficiency.

As an educator, you can:

- ▶ find and provide information and support to families
- ▶ include healthy foods on the menu
- ▶ follow dietitian or medical advice for menus
- ▶ model healthy eating
- ▶ discuss healthy eating
- ▶ be aware of individual needs.

Food allergies

Food allergies can cause serious, life-threatening reactions, so special care is needed when providing meals. The most common types of foods that children may be allergic to are:

- ▶ eggs
- ▶ cow's milk and other dairy products
- ▶ nuts
- ▶ fish and other seafood.

A diet influenced by culture may involve food preferences that relate to:

- ▶ religious observations
- ▶ preparation methods
- ▶ meal patterns or approaches
- ▶ foods eaten
- ▶ hot or cold options
- ▶ spices and flavourings used
- ▶ individual tastes
- ▶ sweet or savoury choices
- ▶ home routines.

Common dietary approaches

Common dietary approaches include:

- ▶ gluten-free diets
- ▶ clean eating, in which foods are whole and unprocessed
- ▶ functional medicine approaches, where underlying causes of disease or conditions are investigated and food choices are included as part of treatment
- ▶ vegetarian diets that do not include meat or fish
- ▶ vegan diets, in which all animal-based products are avoided, including meat, fish, eggs and dairy.

The following outlines how to handle some common dietary approaches.

Gluten-free diet

Gluten-free products, including bread and biscuits, can be made or purchased and substituted for usual foods. Many of these products taste very similar to foods that contain gluten and can be eaten by all children.

Gluten-free grains include:

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| ▶ buckwheat | ▶ corn |
| ▶ polenta | ▶ millet |
| ▶ quinoa | ▶ rice. |

Vegetarian diet

Diets that exclude meat can include nutritious alternatives; however, special care needs to be taken to ensure all nutrients and food groups are provided to children. As with other diets, each family has their own preferences and you must check with parents to ensure you are following their guidelines.

Some alternatives to meat include:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| ▶ beans, including kidney beans, borlotti beans and cannellini beans | ▶ dairy products, such as cheese |
| ▶ lentils | ▶ soy products, such as tofu |
| ▶ chickpeas | ▶ eggs. |

Learning checkpoint 2

Planning nutritious food and drinks

Part A

Analyse the two nutritional information panels (NIPs), then answer the questions that follow.

Cereal 1 – nutrition information		
Servings per package: 12		Serving size: 30 g
Quantity per serving		Quantity per 100 g
Energy	447 kJ	1490 kJ
Protein	3.7 g	12.4 g
Fat, total	0.4 g	1.4 g
Saturated	0.1 g	0.3 g
Carbohydrate, total	20.1 g	37.0 g
Sugars	1.0 g	3.3 g
Sodium	87 mg	290 mg

Cereal 2 - nutrition information		
Servings per package: 16		Serving size: 30 g
Quantity per serving		Quantity per 100 g
Energy	480 kJ	1600 kJ
Protein	6.6 g	21.9 g
Fat, total	0.2 g	0.6 g
Saturated	<0.1 g	0.1 g
Carbohydrate, total	20.8 g	69.4 g
Sugars	9.6 g	32.0 g
Sodium	168 mg	560 mg

1. Which cereal is the healthier choice? Why?

2. If one of the cereals contained the additive 951, what would this additive be? What purpose does it have?

When you follow the policy and procedures for addressing health conditions or illnesses that may impact safe and healthy food handling, you are reducing the chance of contamination. For example, there may be a policy in place that states if a worker is sick, they must not come to work and must only return when they are not contagious. This is especially important if they handle food. It may also be appropriate for a worker to alter their duties; for example, to work in a different area of the service until it is safe for them to handle food again.

Watch this video about food-handling procedures.



Practice task 5

1. Access a copy of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code – Standard 3.3.1 at: <http://aspirelr.link/food-standards-code>

Answer the following questions:

- a. Is a long day care service classed as a 'Food service to vulnerable persons'?

- b. Does a long day care service need to implement a documented and audited food safety program?

- c. What should a long day care service policy say about staff handling food when they are unwell?

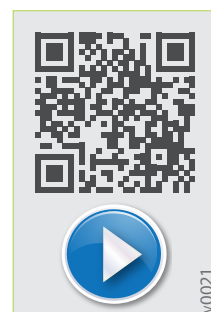
- d. What would you do if the policy did not say this?



Source: Reproduced with permission of NSW Health.

Watch this video for a demonstration of effective hand-washing.

When you wash your hands, you are removing dirt and germs. You also choose to use an antibacterial hand cream or gel instead washing hands, particularly when water and soap is unavailable. these gels also avoids your hands becoming cracked and dry from excessive washing.



There are some foods that grow bacteria easily, including:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| ▶ meat, including poultry and cold meats | ▶ egg products, such as quiche |
| ▶ dairy products | ▶ cooked pasta |
| ▶ eggs | ▶ salads and coleslaw |
| ▶ seafood | ▶ fruit salad and cut fruit. |
| ▶ cooked rice | |

Take particular care when handling these foods to avoid food poisoning. The following are bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

Salmonella

Found in meat, poultry, eggs and egg products. Causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and headache.

Bacillus cereus

Found in meat, cereals, rice and packet soup. Causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps.

Campylobacter

Found in raw meat, raw poultry and raw unpasteurised milk. Causes diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea, headache and muscle pain.

Staphylococcus aureus

Found in meat, poultry, egg products, mayonnaise-based salads and cream- or custard-filled desserts. Causes diarrhoea, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, headache and muscle pain.

Food from home

Each organisation should have a procedure regarding how to handle food brought from home. Parents at your service may provide meals or special items, such as birthday cakes. In each situation, your service procedures must be followed to ensure all children are protected from unsafe foods.

Food brought from home should be clearly named and dated so you know where it came from and when it came into your organisation. This procedure is just as important when bottles and drinking cups are brought from home. It is also useful if parents identify the ingredients in case of allergies and food intolerances.

Milk feeds

All bottles must be clearly labelled and have a protective cap or lid covering the teat. The bottles and teats should look clean and be in good condition, and their contents should be only breastmilk, formula or water. Encourage parents to transport bottles in a cooler to ensure the contents do not develop bacteria.

3. This checklist identifies some ways to prevent food poisoning. These points should be part of your usual policy and procedures.

Add two more points to the checklist, then tick off those that are included as part of your usual workplace practice:

- ☐ Use good personal hygiene
- ☐ Avoid cross-contamination
- ☐ Cook foods thoroughly
- ☐ Avoid temperature danger zones
- ☐ Throw out spoilt food
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Summary

- ▶ All staff should assist to develop and maintain food safety procedures.
- ▶ Following hand-washing procedures is essential for preventing the spread of infection, especially when handling food.
- ▶ Food safety policies and procedures must be followed when carrying out food preparation, handling and storage.