09　Standard Childcare Practice

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

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.

- Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually 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 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 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 join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

Mealtimes

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.

- Children help staff set tables which are arranged for key person groups.

- Cloths are used where practical and children's places are personalised with, for example, mats that they make for themselves and have laminated.

- Their food is brought to their room in serving dishes for each table on a trolley. Dishes are not kept in a food warmer or oven so will not be too hot to touch.

- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.

- Children are encouraged to choose what they want and to take their own helpings.

- Staff have their lunch with children and do not eat different food in front of children. Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.

- 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 swopping their food with one another.

- If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.

- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.

- There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends on other tables. Children may be invited to the babies' room for lunch, to join a sibling or be with their previous carer if they have just moved up into the older group. There should also be opportunities for babies and toddlers to join the older children for lunch, providing they do not find this unsettling or distressing.

- After lunch children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.

- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch in their key groups. Cleaning teeth no sooner than 1 hour after lunch is recommended where hygiene procedures pose no risk (see procedure 04.6 Oral health)/ It is not always recommended for groups in shared premises.

- 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