



POLICY ON HEALTHY EATING

Rationale

“A child’s early years are important for their future health and wellbeing, and good nutrition during this time lays a healthy foundation for all of childhood and life.”

[Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-school Services](#)

The Policy on Healthy Eating specifies the way Buttercup Childcare, will ensure that the food and drink provided to the children attending the service is nutritious, and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the child. The policy also states how breastfeeding is supported in the service.

Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Food provides the energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals to live, grow and function properly. Children need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health and development. The food a child eats in their early years influences their eating habits as they grow and develop. It is important to teach young children about healthy food choices and staying well hydrated, and to help them develop good habits and a healthy relationship with food from an early age.

The interactions relating to healthy eating are also important. [Síolta](#) Standard 9 Component 9.4 states that a quality service is proactive in supporting the development of healthy eating habits in children while supporting their enjoyment and appreciation of eating and drinking as a positive social experience.

[Aistear](#) states that adults support children’s psychological and physical well-being by helping them to make healthy choices about nutrition, hygiene and exercise (this also applies to hydration). One of Aistear’s learning goals for young children is to “make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine”.



“Learning about how to live in a healthy way, and being able to take increasing responsibility for making good health choices and caring for themselves, enables children to experience wellbeing in their present lives, and lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future. A key part of learning about and adopting healthy lifestyles involves children seeing these modelled positively and enthusiastically by the important people in their lives, including their peers, families, communities and early childhood educators.”

The National Quality Standards Professional Learning
Program Early Childhood Australia, 2012

Healthy eating needs to be considered even more broadly than just how it affects physical and even social development.

“The eating experience provides not only sustenance but also an opportunity for learning. It affects not only children’s physical growth and health but also their psychosocial and emotional development.” [Feeding Behaviour of Infants and Young Children and Its Impact on Child Psychosocial and Emotional Development](#) Yi Hui Liu & Martin T. Stein, 2013, University of California San Diego

It is important to consider that poor nutrition affects a child’s physical development and also that social behaviours and even learning functions are susceptible to the negative effects of poor nutrition and poor interactions relating to eating and drinking. The [United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition](#) says that even in mild or moderate situations, stunted growth resulting from poor nutrition is correlated with poor academic performance and lowered mental capacity.

Legislation and regulatory requirements

- Regulation 10 of the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) requires that there is a healthy eating policy in place that sets out the way the service ensures that the food and drinks provided to the children

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087 2224224

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attending the service are nutritious, and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the child.

- Regulation 22 on Food and Drink requires that the registered provider ensures that all children attending the service receive adequate, suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink, which takes their individual needs into consideration.

Children need:

- Their careers and educators to understand the importance of healthy nutrition.
- This policy to recognise that food has always been a central part of community, social, cultural and religious life.
- This policy to recognise in its practice guidance that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs (not to be used as a reward for behaviour, but enjoyed as part of a positive social experience). These emotional needs include a sense of security, love and acceptance.
- The interactions relating to eating and drinking to always be positive.
- The effect of poor nutrition on learning to be considered.
- This policy to ensure that all aspects of healthy eating are considered and their dietary requirements are appropriately met as well as any particular religious requirements their family may have. Children with allergies and very young children also need this policy to help ensure that they are not put at risk of allergic reactions to food or drink or of choking.

Parents and guardians need:

- This policy to clearly outline the service's approach to healthy eating including the ways in which sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink are made available to their child and how these are suited to their age and development, and psychological as well as physical needs.

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087 2224224

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- To know what foods and drinks are provided by the service or to be included by them in their child's lunch box, how they are provided and what foods or drinks should not be included.
- To be aware of the service's positive approach to interactions with the children relating to eating and drinking.
- To know what the service's specific approach is to ensuring that no child will be given access to a food to which they have a known allergy and that no child will be at risk of choking on any foods.

All staff members need:

- This policy to provide clear information on what the service's approach is to providing healthy, safe and nutritious food for the children.
- This policy to provide the correct information for them to give to parents/guardians about what foods the service will provide and in what ways, and what types of foods they encourage parents/guardians to provide for their child in snack or lunch boxes.
- The policy to include guidance on how to ensure that food provided in the service is safe for the children.
- Clarity on what the service approach is to how, when, where and how much the children eat or are fed, as well as what kinds of interactions with the children are expected of them around and during meal times.
- To know how to access the quality guidelines relating to food and nutrition that are associated with the policy, and how these guidelines are to be implemented in the service.

Management needs:

- This policy to ensure that the service meets the requirements of the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) in relation to Food and Drink (Regulation 22) and the provision of a Healthy Eating Policy (Regulation 10).

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- To ensure through this policy that all staff members and all parents/guardians of children attending the service are clear on the service's approach to healthy eating and positive interactions relating to eating and drinking.
- All staff members and parents/guardians/carers to clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to all children attending the service being provided appropriately with healthy, safe and nutritious foods that meet their particular needs and religious requirements.

National Quality Frameworks

- [Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](#)

3. Policy

Buttercup Childcare is committed to promoting children's health and encouraging healthy eating habits as a registered childcare provider we shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food snacks and drink are available for each child attending the service in accordance with the requirements of the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#)

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Fruit and fresh water are always available to children.

- Snack time will be enjoyed and socialisation and interaction encouraged.
- Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised.
- We do not allow fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, popcorn, chewing gum, nuts or nut spreads.
- Preferred drinks are milk and water.
- Breastfeeding supports are provided where required including storage for breast milk.
- Children will always be supervised at snack and meal times and will never be forced to eat.

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087 2224224

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- Children will be assisted at meal times as required but they will also be encouraged to feed themselves as appropriate for their age and stage of development.
- Parents and guardians will be notified if their child has not eaten well.
- Lunches for pre-school children and meals for after-school children are provided by parents and guardians. The food provided must be an appropriate serving size for a child and it must be in keeping with the service's healthy eating policy.
- A labelling system is in place which ensures all food and drink brought in from the child's home are identifiable to the child.

4. Procedures & Practices

- Parents are encouraged to comment on the policy on healthy eating.
- Breakfast will be available each morning. This will comprise of a choice of cereals, toast and fruit
- Access to fruit, milk and fresh water is permitted at all times.
- Full fat milk will only be served, unless parents request a low fat option.
- Parents and guardians provide lunch for the preschool child. A meal is supplied by parents/guardians for the after-school child.
- Staff will receive training in relation to healthy eating and food safety. The minimum training requirement is successful completion of Food Safety (HACCP) Supporting Staff Level 1
- All food in the service will be stored, prepared and served using good food safety practices.
- Food is reheated in a microwave and a food thermometer is used to check the temperature of the food. A temperature logbook is maintained.
- There is a fridge in each of the pre-school rooms for perishable items.
 - Food items and containers are labelled with the child's name before being put in fridge.



- Temperatures readings are taken daily to ensure fridge temperature is maximum 5°C or less.
- Parents are encouraged to provide appropriate food portion sizes for their child.
- Where required, the food is safely prepared and served by staff.
- Children are always supervised when eating.
- Staff sit with children during meal times and encourage good eating habits.
- Children will sit when eating or having a drink.
- Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment.
- Children with allergies or special diets will be closely supervised and parents will be asked to provide as much information as possible about suitable foods.
- Parents are asked not to send sweets, crisps and other snack food to the service.
- Where lunches and after-school meals provided by parents and guardians include grapes or sausages, which can be a choking hazard, they must be sliced lengthways.
- Children will be encouraged to play outside every day to ensure they receive sunlight which helps their bodies to make vitamin D.

Food for special occasions

Food is often part of a celebration, for example a birthday cake. There is nothing wrong with occasional treats.

Birthday party food should be discussed in advance with the staff. Non-food treats including decorations, party games and face-painting can be used to mark occasions. Holidays, festivals and religious occasions of various cultures provide an opportunity to introduce children to various cultures. These events can be marked by special foods but also by other activities.



Rewards and treats

Rewards are given to children as a means of reinforcing good behaviour or if they have done well at a task. Buttercup Childcare staff will aim to use other types of rewards rather than food rewards, such as sweets. Examples include praise, choosing the story to read, being the leader in an activity, having first choice in something and a clap from the other children.

Outside catering companies

This is currently not relevant to Buttercup Childcare. Breakfast, snacks and fruit are provided by Buttercup Childcare. All other lunches and meals are supplied by parents/guardians.

Learn through food

Food is an important part of life. Buttercup Childcare can provide opportunities to learn about food, where it comes from, how it grows, general good health and food cultures. Learning how to choose and enjoy many different nutritious foods in early childhood can provide the foundation for a lifetime of healthy food choices (Appendix A).

Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Preschool services

<https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf>

5. Communication Plan *[For staff & families]*

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Healthy Eating on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.



This Policy is available on our website, www.buttercupchildcare.ie this policy will also be reviewed with all staff members at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies and procedures will be available on our website and during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located in the Hive.

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/guardians and all staff members will receive notification of any updates.

6. Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Policy on Managing Behaviour
- Staff Training Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Partnership with Parents Policy
- Policy on Infection Control
- Risk Management Policy

7. References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation

- [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#)
- **Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Preschool Services**
health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf
- **Little Bites**
[www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-\(ROI\)/Healthy-eating.aspx](http://www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-(ROI)/Healthy-eating.aspx)
- **3 Week Menu Plan**

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087 2224224

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www.ncn.ie/images/3week_menu_plan_available_on_web.pdf

- **Serving Size**

www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/1/G6101-Safefood-App-Port-Control-Guide_single-pages.pdf

- **Infant Feeding**

[A Practical Infant Feeding Guide for Healthcare Professionals](#)
[Best Practice for Infant Feeding in Ireland](#)

- **Breastfeeding**

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EncouragingSupportingBreastfeedingInChildcareResourceKit.pdf>
<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/strategy6-support-breastfeeding-early-care.pdf>

- **Bottle Feeding**

www.indi.ie/images/public_docs/1620_New_Guide_to_Bottle_Feeding.pdf

- **Weaning**

www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/Food-Diet/Life-Stages/Weaning.aspx
www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Healthy%20Eating/HPM00971.pdf

- **Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute**

www.indi.ie/fact-sheets/fact-sheets-on-nutrition-for-babies-children/365-links-to-useful-resources-on-childhood-nutrition-a-guide-for-parents-and-teachers.html

- **Safe Food – Make a Start** Promotes healthy eating and food safety. Provides free to download resources on a range of childhood nutrition topics, including healthy lunchbox ideas.

www.safefood.eu/Start/Welcome.aspx

- **Board Bia nutrition for two to fives**

www.bordbia.ie/consumer/aboutfood/nutrition/pages/nutritionfortwotofives.asp

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087 2224224

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- **Irish Food Allergy Network** provides a guide to assist those who, through their work, encounter children and families affected by food allergy
www.ifan.ie
- **My Child**
www.mychild.ie
- **Early Childhood Ireland – Nutrition and Regulation**
www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/operating-childcare-service/nutrition/nutrition-and-regulation/
- **NCN Healthy Ireland Smart Start**
www.ncn.ie/index.php/contact-us/2-ncn/201-healthy-ireland-smart-start-nutrition
- 'Feeding Behaviour of Infants and Young Children and Its Impact on Child Psychosocial and Emotional Development', Liu YH, Stein MT., 2013. In: Tremblay RE, Boivin M, Peters RDeV, eds. Faith MS, topic ed. Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development [online]. www.child-encyclopedia.com/child-nutrition/according-experts/feeding-behaviour-infants-and-young-children-and-its-impact-child
- Zero to Three The Feeding Relationship
www.zerotothree.org/resources/1071-the-feeding-relationship

8. Who Must Observe This Policy

a) The Owner/Management will:

- Ensure the service complies with all relevant Healthy Eating legislation and guidelines.
- Ensure the policy and its related procedures and practices are implemented and regularly reviewed. (Regulations 10, 14 and 22)

b) Service Manager will:

- Implement the policy and its related procedures and practices.



- Ensure that all staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and given appropriate training and support.
- Take appropriate action in any cases of additional needs.
- Lead the annual review of the policy.

c) All Staff Team Members will:

- Ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities to ensure children's nutrition and healthy eating needs are met according to this policy.
- Implement the policy and its related procedures and practices.
- Contribute to reviews of the policy.
- Model good eating habits.

d) Parents/Guardians will:

- Be aware of and understanding their role in the implementation of the service's Healthy Eating Policy and understanding that it applies to all of the children attending the service.

9. Actions to be followed if the Policy is not implemented

The Policy on Healthy Eating is to be reinforced by management and staff at the beginning of each academic year thereby reminding parents/guardians and children.

Contact Information

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

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11. Policy Created

Date this policy was created	24 th August 2020
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12. Signatures

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by	Georgina O' Brien Service Manager	
Approved by		

13. Review Date

Date this policy will be reviewed	Annually
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Appendix A

Food Pyramid for adults, teenagers and children aged 5 and over

