

Nutrition & Physical Activity Policy

Better Living Exercise Nutrition Daily



Nutrition & Physical Activity Policy



Nutrition Policy

In an effort to provide the best possible nutrition environment for the children in my care, I have adopted the following nutrition policies.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

I support children's healthy food choices by:

- Offering fruit to children at least 2 times a day.
- Only offering fruit canned in its own juice (no syrups), fresh, or frozen.
- Offering vegetables to children at least 2 times a day.
- Only offering vegetables steamed, boiled, roasted, or lightly stir-fried with little added fat.
- Gently encouraging children to try fruits and vegetables, and giving positive reinforcement when they do.
- Role-modeling positive behaviors by eating fruits and vegetables in the presence of the children.

Rationale: *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourages consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables – at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that may protect against many chronic diseases. They help children feel fuller longer. The day care setting presents the perfect opportunity to challenge children's taste buds. It also provides children with the opportunity to learn about different textures and colors.*

Adding sugar to fruit adds calories to children's diets without adding nutrients. This sugar can lead to dental caries and weight gain. The amount of extra sugar in children's diets should be minimized so that they can learn to appreciate the natural taste of foods and avoid the health risks of a diet high in sugar.

Children's diets that are low in vegetables tend to be higher in calories and lower in nutrients. The child care setting is the perfect place to expose children to different vegetables to foster life-long healthy eating habits. Vegetables that are bright or dark green in color often contain more vitamins and minerals than their less colorful counterparts. It is important to serve children a variety of different, brightly colored vegetables one or more times daily.

Cooking and serving vegetables with lard, margarine, and butter adds extra saturated or "unhealthy" fat to an otherwise healthy food. Taste preferences are developed at young ages and serving vegetables drowned in fat doesn't teach children about vegetables' tastes and textures.

Good eating habits just don't happen – they must be learned. Child care providers can support positive eating habits by successfully introducing new foods, including fruits and vegetables, and encouraging favorable attitudes towards them. Often children are more willing to try new foods when away from home, especially when they see other children eating those foods.

Nutritious food is an important part of the healthy development of young children. The first few years of life are critical to development and require good nutrition to meet metabolic needs for growth. During this time, life-long eating habits are formed, which are influenced by role models such as parents and caregivers. Child care providers serve as role models for children by trying new foods, eating the healthy foods served, and by avoiding serving unhealthy foods during their care. Children are more likely to try new foods if they see an adult role model trying and liking a food.

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MEATS, FATS, AND GRAINS

I am committed to children's nutrition by:

- Offering fried or pre-fried (frozen and breaded) meats (chicken nuggets) or fish (fish sticks) once a week or less.
- Offering fried or pre-fried potatoes (French fries, tater tots, hash browns) once a week or less.
- Offering high fat meats like sausage, bacon, hot dogs, or bologna once a week or less.
- Offering beans or lean meats at least once a day.
- Offering most breads, pastas, and grains made from whole grains. Serving brown rice for all rice dishes when possible. Serving whole grain cereals containing 6 grams of sugar or less.
- Offering sweet or salty foods less than once a week or never.

Rationale: Most fats should come from sources of unsaturated fat such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils, with limited fats from saturated and trans fat sources, like high fat meats, dairy products and processed baked goods. Fried and pre-fried foods are common sources of saturated and trans fat in children's diets. Reducing the use of these foods may significantly reduce the percentage of total calories that come from these unhealthy fats.

Children need protein in their diet for growth and maintenance. Lean meats like baked and broiled chicken, turkey and fish are great sources of protein. Beans are a great substitute for meat; they are low-fat and high in protein and fiber.

The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children consume at least three servings of whole grains each day, making up at least half of the grain products consumed. Whole grains are rich sources of fiber and other nutrients. Sugary and salty foods tend to be high in calories while adding little or no nutrients to children's diets.

BEVERAGES

I support children's healthy beverage choices by:

- Making drinking water clearly visible to the children at all times (indoors and outdoors).
- Rarely offering sweetened drinks other than 100% juice.
- Offering 100% fruit juice twice a week or less.
- Serving only 1% or skim milk to children age 2 or older.

Rationale: Children play hard and need enough fluid to stay well hydrated. They should be encouraged to drink throughout the day because they often don't know when they are thirsty. Reach for water when children say they are thirsty and save 100% fruit juice for the occasional snack, not as a replacement for whole fruit. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a majority of fruit and vegetables come from the whole food rather than juices. Excessive juice consumption is associated with tooth decay and diarrhea in children and may be linked to overweight or obesity.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends serving 1% or fat-free milk to children aged 2 years and older. 1% and fat-free milk contain as much calcium and Vitamin D as 2% and whole milk without the extra calories and saturated fat. Many sports and soft drinks are high in calories and low in key nutrients. Intake of sugary beverages has been associated with negative consequences such as overweight and obesity. Substituting sugary beverages for milk could result in calcium deficiency that can lead to poor bone health and fractures. Cavities can also be a result of too much consumption of sugary beverages.

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MENUS AND VARIETY

I am committed to providing a variety of foods to help assure that the children in my care consume all nutrients essential to good health by:

- Using a cycle menu of ___ weeks or greater that allows for seasonal changes.
- Serving new foods with familiar foods.
- Offering food options from a variety of cultures.
- Offering a variety of different foods on the menu.

Rationale: A perfect food with all the essential nutrients does not exist. A food may be a good source of some vitamins and minerals, but still lack other important ones. Children need variety just like adults, especially for establishing life-long healthy eating habits. Children spend many hours in out-of-home care, so it is important to offer a wide variety of foods every day. To increase acceptance of new foods, serve them with familiar foods. Serving foods from other cultures is also a great way to increase the variety of foods serving. It teaches children about diversity by introducing them to new foods and new cultures.

FEEDING PRACTICES

I support and encourage healthy eating habits by:

- Helping children determine if they are full before removing their plate.
- Helping children determine if they are still hungry before serving additional food.
- Gently and positively encourage children to try a new or less favorite food.
- Not using food to encourage positive behavior or taking food away for bad behavior.

Rationale: Young children's appetites often vary day-to-day, and their tastes may change rapidly. When feeding children, the "division of responsibility" should be in place. It is the caregiver's responsibility to buy, prepare and serve healthy meals and snacks. It is the child's responsibility to decide if, how much, and what to eat. If this "division of responsibility" is respected, children will learn to try new foods, respect their fullness cues, and maintain life-long healthy eating behaviors. It is important to remember that children will not starve; avoid turning mealtimes into power struggles.

Offering food to encourage behavior places unnecessary importance on food and may have negative effects. This behavior teaches children to eat when they're not hungry and can alter their internal hunger and satiety cues. Foods that are usually used to encourage positive behavior consist of high sugar or fat foods, which are not nutritious and offer little benefit in terms of growth and development. Moreover, as children become older rewarding with food may lead to emotional overeating and overweight.

FOODS OFFERED OUTSIDE OF REGULAR MEALS AND SNACKS

I support children's nutrition by:

- Having written guidelines for holidays and celebrations that encourage healthier options.
- Celebrating holidays and birthdays with mostly healthy foods or non-food treats.

Rationale: A healthy, nutritious child care environment is composed of many things. While serving nutritious foods on a day-to-day basis is important, foods offered outside of regular meals and snacks also play a role. Celebrations in America are typically associated with calorie dense foods of limited nutritional value, such as cookies, cake, and candy. When done occasionally, this may not pose a problem, but it still sends a message to children that this is the only way to celebrate.

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SUPPORTING HEALTHY EATING

I support fostering healthy eating habits at mealtime by:

- Joining children at the table for meal times.
- Serving meals family style.
- Consuming the same food and drink as the children.
- Rarely eating less healthy foods in front of the children.
- Providing visible support for good nutrition in the children's learning and play area through use of posters, pictures, and displayed books.
- Informally talking with the children about trying and enjoying healthy foods.

Rationale: An important way for providers to serve as role models is to sit with the children and eat the same foods that the children are served. Serving family style meals also creates an opportunity for children to practice their independence; pouring, spooning and passing skills; and table manners. Additionally, this time together provides opportunity to educate children about healthy and proper table manners, talk about what they are eating and where it came from, and engage children in a pleasant discussion that can help nourish good human relations among the children.

Children are always observing their providers, especially during mealtime. Caregivers should be willing to try new foods and adopt the same behaviors they are trying to teach children. When a new food is served, teachers can significantly influence acceptance among children through their own enthusiasm for trying new things. Alternatively, if staff consumes less healthy foods in front of children, they are actually delivering negative messages to children in their care.

Children will gain appreciation for healthy foods and become more willing to try them if an adult talks informally about trying and enjoying the food. Environmental variables can also influence healthy eating behaviors by tailoring children's environment to support good nutrition. Simple acts of displaying posters, discussing and asking questions, demonstrating positive support, and being happy during mealtimes will mold healthy life-long eating habits.

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR PROVIDERS, CHILDREN AND PARENTS

I will create a positive environment that promotes the development of good eating habits, by:

- Attending training opportunities on nutrition (other than food safety and food programs guidelines) twice per year or more.
- Providing nutrition education to the children, through a Nutrition Program (BLEND Beginnings) one time per week or more.
- Providing nutrition education to parents twice per year or more.

Rationale: Child care providers have a unique opportunity to teach children and their parents about nutrition through daily interactions. Providers should be informed about the basic principles for creating a positive nutrition environment and the importance of their role as a model for the children. Nutrition education helps children form positive attitudes about food and eating, helps children understand why eating healthy is important, and helps to shape their eating habits.

Nutrition & Physical Activity Policy



Physical Activity Policy

In an effort to provide the best possible environment for the children in my care to be physically active, I have adopted the following physical activity policies.

ACTIVE PLAY AND INACTIVE PLAY

I will ensure every child is physically active everyday by:

- Providing at least 120 minutes of active play time to all children every day.
- Providing opportunities for outdoor active play two or more times per day.
- Providing teacher-led physical activity to all children two or more time per day.
- Making sure that children are rarely seated (excluding naps) for periods of more than 30 minutes.
- Not withholding active play time for children who misbehave. Instead, I reward good behavior with extra active play.
- Limiting screen time to less than one hour a day.

Rationale: Children need to be active everyday and physical activity periods should be of sufficient length to obtain health benefits. Children need at least 120 minutes of active play every day, including both structured and unstructured play time to maintain their fitness levels and to develop physically, mentally and emotionally. Active playtime means that children are allowed to move freely, enjoying active movements such as skipping, running and climbing.

Children who develop appropriate gross motor skills at a young age are more likely to be physically active throughout their lives. Children do not just naturally develop fundamental movement skills; as a result, it is important that caregivers engage children in a variety of activities so they learn necessary skills and develop confidence in their physical abilities. Furthermore, children will learn to enjoy physical activity if they are directed by knowledgeable adults who model how physical activity can be fun.

Time spent outdoors benefits children in many ways. It is known that the more time children spend outdoors, the more physical activity they obtain. Being outside gives children more space to move freely on their own and to play with other children, leading to both physical and social development.

Limiting a child's active playtime as punishment encourages inactivity and could lead to long-term negative attitudes or feeling toward active play. Children will associate physical activity not with a healthy lifestyle or fun, but rather with being bad or good.

Children learn through interacting with their surrounding environment. Allow children opportunities to leave their seats and explore the space around them. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should be limited to one to two hours of television viewing daily. Child care settings provide a stimulating environment that is more enriching than what screens can offer.

STRUCTURED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY is adult-led play. Structured activity should include:

- Daily planned physical activity that supports age-appropriate motor skill development. The activity should be engaging and involve all children with minimal or no waiting.
- Daily, fun physical activity that is vigorous (gets children "breathless" or breathing deeper and faster than during typical activities) for short bouts of time.

UNSTRUCTURED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY is child-led free play. Unstructured activity should include:

- Activities that respect and encourage children's individual abilities and interests.
- Teacher engagement with children, support for extending play, and gentle prompts and encouragement by caregivers when appropriate, to stay physically active.



Physical Activity Policy

PLAY ENVIRONMENT

I will ensure children are physically active everyday by:

- I provide fixed play equipment (tunnels, climbing and balancing equipment) that is extensive and varied for all children.
- I provide portable play equipment (wheeled toys, balls, hoops, ribbons) that is diverse and available for children to use at the same time.
- I make outdoor portable play equipment freely available to all children all of the time.
- Outdoor play space includes an open grassy area and a track/path for wheeled toys.
- Indoor play space is available for all activities, including running, when weather does not permit outdoor play.

Rationale: Children should have safe and appropriate indoor and outdoor environments that help promote gross motor skills (large muscle activities). According to research, children tend to pattern their type of play based on their environment. Kids need to move their bodies in many different ways in order to develop muscles, build strong bones, and grow.

Permanent play equipment that is part of the outdoor play-space helps to promote child development. Play equipment should allow children to perform such activities as climbing, balancing, swinging, hanging, sliding, and other full body movements. The more varied the play equipment, the greater the variety of movement's children will be able to make.

Portable play equipment stimulates a variety of motor skills, which allow children to develop and expand eye-hand and eye-foot coordination and develop other fundamental motor skills (such as throwing, catching, and striking). Enough play equipment should be available so that children have access to it without waiting for a long period of time.

Children should have an outdoor play space free of numerous obstacles. When children have access to open play space, activities that include running and chasing increase. Indoor space must provide enough room for children to move their entire body, like jumping or dancing.

SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

I support fostering physical activity habits by:

- Encouraging children to be active and will join children in active play.
- Provide visible support for physical activity in the children's learning and play area through use of posters, pictures, and displayed books.

Rationale: As role models for children, child care providers should be aware of the importance of physical activity. Children learn by watching adults, particularly teachers, do. Teachers can influence children's attitudes towards physical activity. Children will see that providers enjoy being physical active, will believe physical activity is important and will learn (and remember) movements better. When providers express pleasure during physical activity, it motivates children to engage in the same activity, as well as form positive associates with physical activity.

Environmental variables can influence behaviors related to physical activity; therefore, it is important to tailor children's environments to help support physical activity. Simple acts of displaying posters, discussing and asking questions, demonstrating positive support, and being happy during active playtime will show children that this part of their day is valuable to them and others.



_____ Physical Activity Policy

I will create a positive environment that promotes physical activity, by:

- Attending training opportunities on physical activity (other than playground safety) 2X per year or more.
- Providing physical activity education to the children, through a Physical Activity Program (BLEND Beginnings) 1X per week or more.
- Providing physical activity education to parents 2X per year or more.

Rationale: *Those involved with direct care of children should be informed about the importance of physical activity and should be trained on ways to integrate a variety of fun physical activity sessions into their daily lesson plans and group activities. Such training can increase staff's comfort level in leading physical activity and participating in physical activity. Furthermore, staff training may lead staff to become more involved in both leading and participating in physical activities with the children, which will benefit their own lives too.*

Regular physical activity lessons for children will teach them how to move their bodies properly and practice basic motor skills. Providers can demonstrate to children how to perform certain activities and improve their skills in the activity.

The more parents are kept informed about what their children are learning about and doing at the child care site, the more they are able to participate in activities as well as reinforce those lessons in the home. Regular information to parents about physical activity will make them more knowledgeable and better able to support the child care's efforts to get their children active.

Much of the language used in this document is provided by and adapted from the NAP SACC Program, Center of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. (www.NAPSACC.org). And, by the Nemours Prevention Health and Prevention Services. (www.GrowUpHealthy.org).

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Healthy Guidelines for Celebrations

To encourage lifelong healthy habits and make a positive contribution to children's diets and overall health I will offer healthy foods with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and other foods that are low in fat, sugar, salt and caffeine during celebrations and holiday parties. Therefore, I ask parents to provide only healthy foods, such as:

- Fresh fruit
- Applesauce
- Baked corn, whole wheat or whole grain chips
- Baked potato chips
- Goldfish, Cheez-its and other baked crackers
- Low-fat/air-popped popcorn
- Soy Crisps
- Rice cakes
- Pita bread
- Mini-bagel or ½ bagel with low-fat cream cheese
- Ginger snaps
- Whole grain, low-sugar cereal
- Low-fat fig bars
- Hummus
- Salsa
- Guacamole
- Muffins/baked breads that are low in fat and sugar with added fruit and whole grains (banana bread, blueberry muffins, etc.)
- Dried fruit (such as raisins, apricots, etc.)
- Fruit cups in natural juices (no added syrup or sugar)
- Fresh vegetables
- Bread sticks
- Baked pita chips, pita bites
- Pretzels
- Sun Chips
- Graham crackers/teddy grahams/goldfish grahams
- English muffin
- Low-fat granola bars
- Animal crackers
- Yogurt (fat free or low fat)
- Fat- free or low-fat pudding
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Milk (low-fat or fat-free)
- String cheese/low-fat cheese cubes/slices
- Water

I encourage using alternatives to food for celebrations and rewards, like favorite stories, music, games, or activities:

- Art parties
- Brainteaser games
- Physical activity breaks
- Games or puzzles
- Group activities
- V.I.P. buttons or badges
- Field trips
- Building obstacle courses
- Singing songs
- Gift certificates
- T-shirts, hats, or sunglasses
- Special guests
- Kite flying
- Dance parties
- Certificates, trophies, ribbons, or plaques
- Olympic-themed or sports games

Candy of any kind is not permitted.

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