

# Healthy Eating Policy

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## Healthy Eating Policy

In the childcare setting, children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks that are healthy, balanced, and nutritious. All food and drinks consumed, along with this policy, align with the requirements set out within the documents [Early years foundation stage statutory framework for childminders](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#), the current NHS information, Bristol City Council's [Health and wellbeing strategy](#), along with useful information set out on the Bristol Early Years website Health section [Health - Bristol Early Years](#)

### Bristol City Council's Health and wellbeing strategy

The overarching vision is for citizens to thrive in a city that supports their mental and physical health and wellbeing, with children growing up free of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's), and the gaps in health outcomes between the most economically deprived areas and the most affluent areas of Bristol significantly reduced.

The key themes of the health and wellbeing strategy

- Healthy childhoods, Healthy bodies, Healthy minds, Healthy places and Healthy systems

With reference to our healthy eating policy and our parental partnership working, the strategy (and our childcare setting), plans to promote oral health, aiming to reduce inequalities by supporting the five priorities listed:

- promote oral health through healthier food and drink choices
- promote oral health by improving levels of oral hygiene
- improve population exposure to fluoride
- improve early detection and treatment of oral disease
- reduce inequalities in oral health

### **Information gathering**

Before a child is admitted to the setting, information will be obtained covering any special dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies, food intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information will be updated to ensure that it remains current and reflects any changes that occur. [Major-allergens-policy-doc.doc](#)

### **Allergy plan and risk assessment**

The setting will have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. This information must be kept up to date and shared with assistants at the setting. Regard will be taken to the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) allergy action plan [BSACI Allergy Action Plan](#)

Where there is a known food allergy or intolerance, a risk assessment will be created to ensure safe practices are considered and upheld. This will include safe practices regarding food consumed by the other minded children at the setting, stringent cleaning of food preparation areas, safe food storage (mitigating any possible cross contamination) and safe food preparation. The setting will comply with food hygiene rules as set out within the document [Safer food, better business for childminders | Food Standards Agency](#)

The settings incident form will be filled out as appropriate following any observed signs or symptoms indicating an intolerance or allergy to a previously unknown food source. All medications or treatments will be recorded using the settings medications form. As appropriate the setting will seek emergency, medical advice or treatment.

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Everyone who works in the setting will be aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods which is sometimes called complementary feeding or weaning. To maintain awareness our setting will refer to the NHS advice on food allergies: [Food allergy - NHS](#) and treatment of anaphylaxis: [Anaphylaxis - NHS](#)

### **Menu substitutions**

When creating menus, the setting will also consider substitutions and replacement ingredients for children with special dietary requirements. These may be linked to food allergies, intolerances or coeliac disease, religious and cultural beliefs, and vegetarianism or veganism. DfE's help for early years providers website has an easy [substitution table](#).

### **Balanced diet**

A healthy balanced diet for children aged from one to five years is based on the four food groups listed below, which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop:

- **Fruit and vegetables.** These include: • fresh, frozen, tinned or dried fruit and vegetables • pulses such as lentils and beans.
- **Starchy Carbohydrates.** These include: • bread • potatoes, sweet potatoes, and other starchy root vegetables • pasta and noodles • rice and other grains • breakfast cereals.
- **Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives.** These include: • milk • cheese • yoghurt and fromage frais.
- **Proteins.** These include: • beans, pulses and nuts • meat and poultry • fish and shellfish • eggs • meat alternatives.

One of the basic principles of healthy eating is variety, as eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients. The setting will plan meals and snacks to include a variety of food and drinks from the four food groups listed above each day, as this will provide children with a good balance of nutrients and help ensure their nutritional needs are met. The setting will take account of when children attend and will adjust the menu accordingly to ensure the options available are varied.

More information regarding the food groups and incorporating the recommended daily amounts for each group can be found within the [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#). Information relating to babies and what foods to avoid, can be found on pages 10, 11 and 12 within the guidance.

The [Eatwell Guide](#) uses government advice to show what a healthy and balanced diet looks like. It shows what a balance of foods should look like in one day or over a whole week. The advice in the Eatwell Guide applies to children from the age of 2 years.

### **Why good nutrition matters for children**

Young children are growing quickly and have high energy and nutrient requirements for their size. A healthy, nutritious, balanced diet is therefore essential for children's health and wellbeing, and contributes to the following:

- **Supports Physical Growth:** Nutrients like protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins are essential for building strong bones, muscles, and tissues.
- **Boosts Brain Development:** Omega-3 fatty acids, iron, and zinc play key roles in cognitive function, memory, and concentration.
- **Strengthens Immunity:** A balanced diet helps the body fight off infections and recover quickly from illness.

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- **Prevents Chronic Conditions:** Establishing healthy eating habits early reduces the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease later in life.
- **Improves Mood and Behaviour:** Stable blood sugar levels from nutritious meals can lead to better emotional regulation and focus.

The settings approach will endeavour to both monitor the foods consumed and offer a well-considered food menu, ensuring children get the right amount of energy and nutrients needed to support growth, development, health, and well-being. Children also eat smaller amounts of food than older children and adults, so it is important for them to eat regular meals and snacks that contain sufficient energy and nutrients to meet their needs. There will be a varied menu designed to encourage children to eat a wide range of foods and develop healthy eating habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond. At the setting we are aware of the types of food that have limited health benefits, which have a higher yield of calories and could, if not minimised, lead to children becoming overweight. Certain foods and drinks can also cause energy slumps and behavioural changes in children, often leading to hyperactivity, irritability, or difficulty concentrating. These include food and drinks containing Sugar and Refined Carbohydrates, Artificial Colourings, Preservatives and Additives and Artificial Sweeteners, therefore, will be avoided where possible.

### **Foods to avoid**

When providing food, the setting will avoid foods high in saturated fat, salt, and/or sugars like cakes, sweet and savoury pastries, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and other confectionary. We will also avoid artificial sweeteners as they may encourage children to prefer very sweet foods. These avoided foods will not be provided as part of any meals, drinks or snacks.

- **Breakfast** - For children who require breakfast at the setting, cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals will not be provided.
- **Snacks** - Dried fruit, such as raisins, sultanas, mangoes, bananas ect will be avoided as a snack option. These fruit options, when appropriate, will only be provided as part of a meal due to the higher natural sugars that dried fruit contains.
- **Lunch and/or tea**  
Flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice will not be offered to children.  
If tinned vegetables or pulses are part of the menu choice, these should contain no added salt and sugar, or those tinned in water.  
Tinned fruit in syrup will not be offered, instead fruit tinned in juice may be provided instead.  
Sweetened yoghurts and fromage frais (including non-dairy alternatives) will be avoided, instead a plain unsweetened option will be offered.

### **Foods options that will be limited**

The guidelines also indicate which foods should be limited. This will help to decrease the amount of sugar, salt and saturated fat in children's diets and increase the variety of foods they are offered. The setting will endeavour to check the label content to ensure healthy options are offered.

The setting will:

- Limit baked beans, if offered as a vegetable option, to once a week.
- Limit sugar and salt content in breakfast cereals. The setting will choose those with the lowest sugar and salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green).
- Limit the salt content in bread and bread products. The setting will choose those with a lower salt content which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.

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- Limit starchy foods which have been fried to a maximum of once a week (e.g. chips, fried rice and fried noodles). The setting will avoid offering this option to children.
- Limit tinned pasta in sauce (e.g. spaghetti hoops) and choose no added sugar options.
- Limit oily fish to a maximum of twice per week.
- Limit the provision of processed meat products (e.g. sausages, breaded chicken, meatballs), processed fish products (e.g. fish fingers, fish cakes), and products made from meat alternatives (e.g. vegetarian sausages), to once a week for each of the 3 types as these products can be high in saturated fat and salt.

### **Drinks**

Fresh drinking water will always be available and accessible to children. Whole milk or semi skimmed milk can be offered as an alternative to water. Skimmed milk or 1% milk will not be offered due to the decreased nutritional content. Squash, fruit juice, smoothies or other drinks, such as milkshakes, flavoured water or fizzy drinks, will not be offered due to the sugar content. Babies will be offered sips of water during mealtimes from an open or free-flow cup without a valve. Open cups help babies learn to sip and are better for their teeth. All children will be encouraged to use an open cup when sat to the table. At other times, such as outings or whilst playing, an alternative suitable drinking vessel will be available to ensure water is always accessible. Children will be encouraged to take regular drinks to stay hydrated, this will be increased following physical activities or during higher temperatures. The setting will work closely with parents regarding suitable drinks brought into the setting to align with oral health and healthy options.

### **Age related food frequency**

From 7-9 months, babies will gradually move toward eating 3 meals a day (breakfast, lunch and tea) in addition to their milk feeds. From around 10 months, babies should be having 3 meals a day as well as milk feeds. When either lunch and/or tea is offered, this will consist of 2 dishes (a main dish and an additional dish). The additional dish could be a starter such as a soup, side dish such as vegetable sticks and dip or second dish such as plain yoghurt and fruit. Children under 12 months old do not need any snacks. If the setting considers that the child is hungry in between meals, extra milk feeds will be offered instead. Children over 12 months old need to eat regularly, with breakfast, lunch (consisting of 2 dishes), and tea (consisting of 2 dishes), plus 2 or 3 snacks every day. Portion sizes will be determined through age and appetite.

### **Recipe ideas**

The NHS website also contain useful Recipes and meal ideas. From first tastes and finger foods to breakfast, lunch and dinner, check out our recipes for babies of all ages [Recipes and meal ideas - Start for Life - NHS](#)

Introducing children to a variety of foods from different cultures helps nurture a broad and balanced nutritious diet, broaden taste preferences, and build appreciation for diversity. The DfE's help for early years providers website has 11 recipe cards for early years settings. [Help for early years providers : Cost-effective healthy food](#)

### **Portion size**

The setting will help children to develop a healthy attitude towards food, therefore food, will not be used as a tool for either reward or restriction. Children, from newborn babies, develop an awareness to when they are 'full', as such the setting will respect the child and their verbal and nonverbal indications that they have had enough. Children will not be encouraged or made to eat more than they would or able to. The setting will monitor each child's appetite and adjust portion sizes to make sure they get enough energy and nutrients. DfE's help for early years providers website has [a guide](#)

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[to portion sizes](#). All food served will be cut to a size that's right for the child's size, age and stage of weaning. This helps avoid choking. [Food safety advice on choking hazards in settings - Foundation Years](#)

### **Traffic light labelling**

Ingredients will be moderated through the traffic light classification, to ensure healthy options are maintained. Food labels identifying 'Red' will be avoided at the setting due to the product containing high levels in fat, saturated fat, salt or sugars. For more information [Food labels - NHS](#)

### **Curriculum**

Relevant and informative conversations will take place with the children, regarding the benefits for having a nutritious, balanced and healthy diet. Conversations will be adapted for children's age and stage of understanding. Naming some vitamins and minerals alongside their nutritional benefits could underpin understanding, such as calcium in dairy products (milk, cheese etc...) helps bones grow strong and healthy, potassium found in bananas contributes to heart health. This is to ensure that as they get older, children understand the importance of having a balanced diet, and therefore, make informed healthy food choices. To aid awareness the setting will read appropriate books linked to health and oral health, as well as introducing relevant activities and resources to aid understanding such as 'teeth cleaning' games, as well as ensuring that children are active, and take account of the [Physical activity guidelines for children \(under 5 years\) - NHS](#)

### **Lunch boxes**

The setting will work in partnership with parents, carers and health professionals to share experience, knowledge, and expertise in supporting nutritious packed lunches. Packed lunches will be stored in a refrigerator if possible, or alternatively in a cool, suitable area.

All food and drinks brought into the setting should comply with our Healthy Eating Policy. The setting would advise for parents of babies who are weaning to initially supply the food. The [NHS Start for Life](#) website has useful advice that can support the introduction for a range of nutritional based food for children from 6 months. The website also advises that babies and young children do not suck directly from food pouches, as this can increase the risk of tooth decay.

To help ensure the safety of children with nut allergies, we ask that parents and carers do not bring nuts or products containing nuts into the setting.

We understand the challenges of budgeting and preparing healthy meals. Financial support is available through Bristol Family Hubs, including access to local food banks: [Financial help](#)

Ideas for Nutritious Packed Lunches:

- [Feeding your child age 2 to 4](#)
- [Mix-Up-and-Munch-1-4-Years.pdf](#)
- [Eating well early years — First Steps Nutrition Trust](#)
- [What to feed young children - NHS](#)

### **Celebrations**

In the setting we value celebrating significant occasions, such as birthdays and cultural events. If families wish to provide food from home, the setting kindly requests that this remains balanced and meets the setting's food guidelines. As an option, you may consider fruit platters to share. There are celebratory alternatives that could be offered that are non-edible, such as bubbles or stickers; these

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are a recognised favourite with children. Balloons should be avoided due to potential latex allergies for some children. Any food shared in the setting would be checked for potential allergens.

### **Reflective practitioner**

Practice is regularly reviewed and as such we will keep up to date with health and nutritional guidelines, ensuring that the setting incorporates any new findings. Using [Bristol Standard publications](#) could showcase these reflections, help generate a deeper thinking with the aim to improve on our previous best, putting the child at the heart of the provision, where their health and wellbeing are further promoted.

Policy Monitoring	
Date Policy was created:	October 2025
Signed by (Printed name and signature):	
Date of next review:	October 2026