

NUTRITION, ORAL HEALTH AND ACTIVE PLAY POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2 Version 2.0

PURPOSE

Woodridge Pre-school acknowledges the importance of healthy eating, oral health and physical activity and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy provides guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators and families at the service to eat nutritious food, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity and active play.
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met.
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus and implementing nutrition, oral health and active play activities.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Woodridge Pre-school is committed to:

- creating policies and practices that promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about safe food preparation, nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met.
- ensuring the buildings, grounds and facilities enable healthy eating, oral health and active play.
- creating a culture in which all community members are respectfully supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be active.
- providing children with formal and informal opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health and health messages about physical activity.
- ensuring staff and educators have access to resources and support for their own healthy eating, oral health and physical activity.
- engaging families, the service community and expert organisations in the promotion and implementation of healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, families, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Woodridge Pre-school.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

There are many benefits to promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour, oral hygiene practices and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instill good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.

As a health promoting service it is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health. Children, staff, educators and families can be supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be physically active through teaching and learning opportunities, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Nutrition

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods, and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide Pre-school children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age.

Oral health

Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being largely preventable. It is important to note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating.

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay affecting over half of all Australian children, making it five times more prevalent than asthma.

Active play

Active play (refer to *Definitions*) develops a strong and healthy body, builds motor and coordination skills, creates a sense of wellbeing and helps protect children from disease. Active play is about moving, being and doing.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition, oral health and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, – refer to *Sources*). Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, oral health and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*).

The Australian Government has guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings including the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines*, the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources and the *National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years* (refer to *Sources*). Practical, healthy eating advice is also available to early childhood services and schools via a telephone advice line: the Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Healthy Eating Advisory Service – refer to *Sources*), run by Nutrition Australia. Early childhood education and care services can also register and implement the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*). This program is designed to create safe, healthy and friendly environments for children, staff educators and families, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Progressive meal times

Although we acknowledge there are some benefits to having progressive meal times, we find that children respond well to having routines in their day. During snack and lunch time, educators sit and eat with the children and scaffold their learning about healthy eating and the importance of drinking water.

These times also provide valuable learning about food allergies and preferences and ensure we are supporting children to help to keep each other safe, practice good hygiene and fuel their bodies to sustain themselves during our extended hours.

Educators are vigilant and are always encouraging children to drink water throughout the day and fill empty water bottles.

If a child is needing to eat outside of the routine meal times, educators facilitate this. Educators also ensure children receive enough time to consume their snacks and lunch.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* including Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Food Act 1984 (Vic)* re. Food Safety
- *National Quality Standard* including Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Active play: Play that involves large muscle-based activities that are essential for a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development incorporating:

- child-initiated active play, which is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games.
- adult-guided active play which encourages children’s physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment.
- physical activity, which includes sport, incidental exercise and many forms of recreation.
- active travel, which includes walking, cycling, scootering or any similar transport where physical activity is used to travel.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

‘Discretionary’ foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre. These can also be referred to as ‘sometimes’ foods and drinks. Examples of discretionary food and drinks include:

- chocolate, confectionery, jelly.
- sweet biscuits, high fat/salt savoury biscuits, chips.
- high sugar/high fat cakes and slices.
- cream, ice cream.
- deep fried foods (e.g. hot chips) and pastry-based foods (pies, sausage rolls and pasties).
- most fast food and takeaway foods.
- some processed meats (e.g. sausages, frankfurts/hot dogs, salami, strasbourg, devon, some commercial chicken nuggets and fish fingers).
- soft drinks, fruit juice and fruit drinks, cordial, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and flavoured mineral water.

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

Oral health: The absence of active disease in the mouth. Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* 2019, National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Dental Health Services Victoria: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Department of Health and Aged Care (2013) *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood:* www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection?language=en
- *The Achievement Program* is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers* (2012): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-infants-toddlers-and-preschoolers-birth-to-5-years
- Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults: www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (6th edition, 2024): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* www.education.vic.gov.au

Service policies

- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events*
- *Food Safety Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play (refer to *Definitions*)
- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children (refer to *Sources*)
- recognising families, educators and staff as role models and encouraging them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the service's Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)) (Only tap water is encouraged.)
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- ensuring educators and staff are supported to access a range of resources and professional development to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives for children
- ensuring that discretionary food and drinks do not appear in any sponsorship, fundraising or marketing activities
- ensuring celebrations and other service events promote healthy food options and limit discretionary options
- ensuring service facilities and equipment enable active travel and road safety for children, staff, educators and families
- ensuring there is a suitable space for breastfeeding and storage of breast milk is available
- ensuring space and facilities are available to allow staff and educators to store and prepare healthy food
- ensuring healthy eating, oral health and active play information and policy requirements are included in the educator and staff induction

- ensuring educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours.

Where food is provided at the service:

At Woodridge Pre-school, all snacks, lunches and After-Kinder Care snacks are provided by the child's parent, guardian or family. In the event of a special occasion at Woodridge Pre-school where food is provided, families are consulted regarding any food items brought into the kindergarten. This will be communicated to families via email prior to the relevant date.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required with all members of the service
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Woodridge Pre-school March 2026.

REVIEW DATE: MARCH 2027