

Policy Statement

Chestnut Playgroup regards snack and lunch times as an important part of the playgroup's day. Eating represents a social time for children, and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating using resources and materials from the Early Years Alliance and the NHS healthy living campaign *Change4Life*. At snack time, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. At lunch times, parents/carers provide a packed lunch for their child and we encourage parents/carers to include a variety of foods that contribute to a healthy and well-balanced diet.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents/carers their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children with Allergies or who are Sick or Infectious policy.)
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his Admission form and parents/carers sign the record to confirm that the information is correct.
- Parents/carers are required to inform us if their child's dietary needs change – including any allergies. The child's record is then updated and parents/carers sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- Staff are fully informed about individual children's dietary needs and this information is also available in written form and is accessible to all staff.
- Snack time is always supervised to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences as well as their parents/carers' wishes. Every effort is made to prevent cross-contamination.
- Where possible we plan snack choices in advance.
- We provide nutritious food for all snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. We include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - meat, fish and protein alternatives;
 - grains, cereals and starch vegetables; and
 - dairy foods;
 - fruit and vegetables.
- We endeavour to include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, as well as providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones. Parents/carers are invited to help us to introduce new foods, especially if they have a food specific to their culture that we can share with the children as a group.
- We recognise rice as a culturally significant food and as such will reheat rice provided by a parent/carer as long as they have signed our 'Reheating Rice' form. This also gives information from the FSA on how to safely prepare/store rice.
- When buying food for snack, particular attention is paid to product ingredients displayed on packaging and we take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents/carers and additional training by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents/carers belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We provide a vegetarian alternative on days when meat or fish are offered and make every effort to ensure Halal meat or Kosher food is available for children who require it. Parents/carers of children who have special food preparation requirements are invited to help us provide food for their child. Food for vegetarians does not come into contact with meat or fish or products.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We use snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We ensure that children are supervised at lunchtimes by members of staff.
- We organise lunch and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate, including allowing staff to sit with children to eat their lunch.
- We usually ask parents/carers to provide children with utensils, but where necessary we will provide these ensuring that they are appropriate for their ages and stages of development, and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- Parents/carers are asked to provide their child with a water bottle, which is identifiable to their child. Water bottles will be replenished with fresh drinking water as and when required throughout the day. The use of water bottles ensures that each child always has drinking water to hand and we reduce the hygiene risk of sharing cups. We inform the children about the importance of drinking water, especially in hot weather or when doing lots of activity.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another. Staff assess the likelihood of children with dietary restrictions accessing the food of other children and take appropriate action to prevent this from happening.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi-skimmed pasteurised milk.

- Bulk buy is avoided where food may go out of date before use.
- Dried packaged food is not decanted from packaging into large bins or containers as this prevents monitoring of sell by/use by dates and allergen information.

Fussy/Faddy Eating

- Children who are showing signs of 'strong food preferences, or aversions to food' are not forced to eat anything they do not want to.
- Children are not made to stay at the table after others have left if they refuse to eat certain items of food.
- Staff work in partnership with parents/carers to support them with children who are showing signs of 'food preference or aversion' and sign post them to further advice, for example, How to Manage Simple Faddy Eating in Toddlers (Infant & Toddler Forum) <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/health-and-childcare-professionals/factsheets/>

Packed Lunches

- We inform parents/carers who provide packed lunch for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting and as we do not have the capacity to refrigerate packed lunches, we ask parents/carers to ensure that where perishable contents are included they include an ice pack to keep food cool.
- We give parents/carers who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- We inform parents/carers of our policy on healthy eating.
- Parents/carers are requested not to bring food that contains nuts. Staff check packets to make sure they do not contain nuts or nut products.
- We encourage parents/carers to provide a well-balanced lunch; for example, sandwiches with a healthy filling, pasta or couscous salad, fruit, and milk based desserts such as yoghurt or crème fraîche. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water if necessary.
- We discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as chocolate and biscuits.

Food Poisoning

- We notify Ofsted of any food poisoning affecting two or more children looked after on the premises as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident.

Food For Play and Cooking Activities

We recognise that some parents/carers and staff may have strong views about food being used for play. It is important to be sensitive to these issues. For example, children who are Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, or who are vegetarian, should not be given any food to play with that contains animal products (Gelatine). Parents/carers' views should be sought on this.

- Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.
- Jelly (including jelly cubes) is not used for play.
- Food for play is risk assessed against allergens and is included in the written risk assessment undertaken for children with specific allergies.
- Staff are constantly alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.
- Pulses are not recommended as they can be poisonous when raw or may cause choking.
- Dried food that is used for play is kept separate from food used for snack.
- Foods that are cooked and used for play, such as dough, have a limited shelf life.
- Cornflour is always mixed with water before being given for play.
- Cornflour and cooked pasta are discarded after an activity; because of the high risk of bacteria forming.
- Utensils used for play food are washed thoroughly after use and/or kept separate from food used for snack.

Children's Cooking Activities

- Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, members of staff should check for allergies and intolerances by checking children's records.
- Children are taught basic hygiene skills such as the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food, and again after going to the toilet, blowing their nose or coughing.
- The area to be used for cooking is cleaned; a plastic tablecloth is advised.
- Children should wear aprons that are used just for cooking.
- Utensils provided are for children to use only when cooking, including chopping/rolling boards, bowls, wooden spoons, jugs, and are stored in the kitchen.
- Members of staff encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner.
- Food ready for cooking or cooling is not left uncovered.
- Cooked food to go home is put in a suitable container and refrigerated if necessary until home time.
- Food play activities are suspended during outbreaks of illness.

Playdough and Raw (uncooked) Flour

All flour including cornflour is raw until the point it is heated or cooked. Raw flour poses a risk of E. coli to young children and current advice is that it should not be used for play, or for uncooked playdough recipes.

- Only playdough that has been cooked or made with precooked flour should be used.
- Only cornflour that has been cooked or made with precooked flour should be used.

If a child or member of staff is allergic to any of the ingredients they must be replaced, and a safe alternative used.

Staff have up to date information about children's allergies or concerns about a potential allergy and these are clearly displayed.

If a younger child is likely to put the playdough/ cornflour in their mouth, a safe alternative is provided.

If a child is likely to eat the playdough due to persistent sensory seeking behaviours the activity will be replaced with a safe alternative.

Children are always supervised when playing with playdough or cornflour.

Children and staff wash their hands before and after the activity.

Other activities with flour?

Uncooked flour should not be used for activities where children are exploring through touch or taste, or there is a likelihood they will put their fingers in their mouths.

Baking activities where flour is used and then the food is cooked is allowed. We will ensure that the activity is risk assessed, and children do not eat the uncooked flour or the mixture.

Legal Framework

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs
- Food Information Regulations 2014

Further Guidance

- Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency) [Safer food, better business for caterers | Food Standards Agency](#)
- Eat Better, Start Better (Action for Children 207) www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/
- Campylobacter (Food Standards Agency) www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/campylobacter/fsw-2014
- a copy of the FSA booklet 'Allergen information for loose foods' is available at www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf
- Food allergy/anaphylaxis guidance
<https://www.bsaci.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BSACIAllergyActionPlan2018NoAAI2981-2.pdf>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/>

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Signed:

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Position: Chair