



Food and Drink Policy 2024-2025

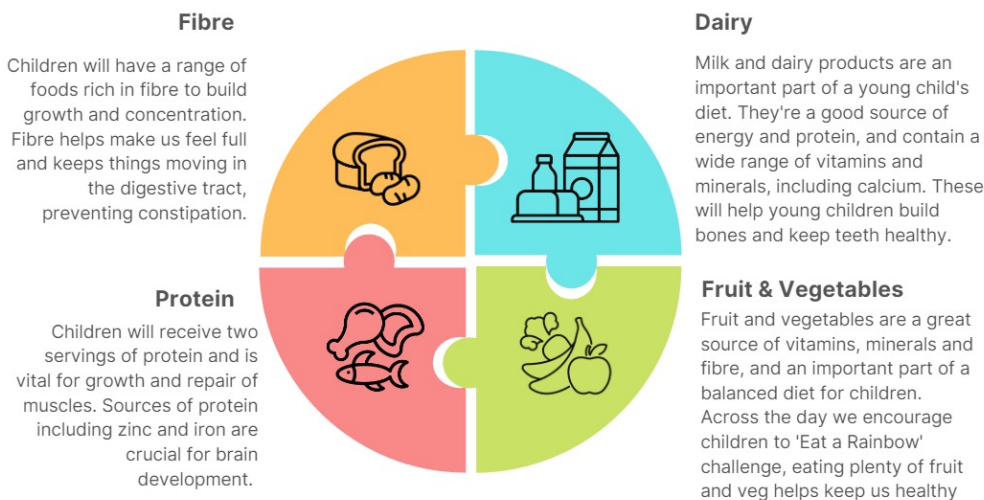
Children’s early years provide an important foundation for their future health and strongly influence many aspects of well-being. Children’s food preferences and eating habits are also formed early in life with consequences for a range of health and development outcomes in later life. It is therefore important that the food provided in early years settings provides appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients and supports development of healthy eating habits in young children, both to support individual children’s growth and development, and as part of national priorities to reduce childhood obesity and ensure every child has the best start in life.

Enchanted Wood Preschool regards snack and mealtimes as an important part of the setting’s day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating during our topics, talks at circle time and adult focused activities. At snack times we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children’s individual dietary needs. We aim to meet the full requirements of The Statutory Framework for the Early Years.

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children’s health and well-being. Good nutrition is important for children to:

- Ensure they get the right amount of energy and nutrients needed to support growth, development, health and well-being.
- Ensure they do not consume too many calories, which may lead to obesity or becoming overweight.
- Encourage children to eat a wide range of foods and develop healthy eating habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond.

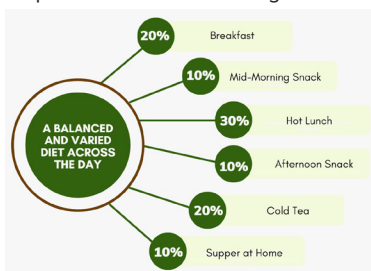
A healthy balanced diet for children aged from one to four years is based on the four food groups listed below, which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop:



Eating well across the day

It is important that the food and drink provided for children aged one to four years is balanced across each day and that children eat regularly, with breakfast, lunch, tea, and two or three snacks provided daily, either within an early years setting or at home. This also helps to ensure that the needs of children who move between different settings and home are met.

The example menus included in this document have been planned to provide approximately 90% of the average daily energy and nutrient requirements for a child aged one to four years, divided across meals and snacks provided during full day care in the following proportions:



This allows you 10% to provide a small snack such as toast and warm milk at home before bedtime.



'Eat a Rainbow Daily Challenge'

We provide fruit with all our meals and our puddings are all fruit based. Our challenge for the children is to 'eat a rainbow' over the day and promote our 'five a day' portions. These are carefully planned in our three week menus to encourage children to try different tastes, colours and flavours. For example: Apples- Tomatoes- Sweetcorn- Blueberries- Satsumas- Grapes



Further Reading:

<https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/assets/documents/better-bites-eat-a-rainbow.pdf>

Food and Drink Provision

Food and drinks we provide at Enchanted Wood Preschool include:

Breakfast

• Children are provided with a choice of two different cereals and a choice of bread products and fruit for breakfast. They can have a drink of water or milk. Breakfast is a crucial meal to start the day.

Snack Time

- We use snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We include foods from a variety of cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.

Packed Lunches

Enchanted Wood Preschool term time sites:

- Ensure packed lunches are kept out of direct sunlight for less than four hours and parents are encouraged to provide an ice pack to keep food cool;
- All lunchboxes are named to prevent any child with an allergy taking the wrong one.
- Inform parents of our policy on healthy eating;
- Encourage parents to provide healthy, balanced and nutritious lunches avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar, salt or artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- Ask that parents provide a named drinks container with fresh water or fruit juice. No Fizzy or squash drinks.
- Ensure foods are cut appropriately to ensure choke hazards can be avoided (please see appendix 1.)
- Discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits.
- We have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another in order to protect children with food allergies.
- Ensure staff sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

There are some great examples of lunchboxes via this link:

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>



Full Time Sites Hot Lunches/ Cold Tea

Enchanted Wood Preschool full time sites:

- Are provided with a hot lunch and dessert by Zebedees, and cold tea daily.
- All allergens are clearly displayed in the instruction booklet and orders made by the site manager are personalised to the group of children using allergy codes (DF- dairy free, PF- pork free etc...)
- At lunchtime the lids are removed, and the temperature of the food is taken and logged. This must read 63 degrees.
- The food is rotated on a three-week basis (week A, B and C) and consists of hot lunch and healthy pudding followed by a four-piece cold tea menu. The menu will be shared with parents when they join and can be found here: Zebedees Hot Lunch Menu Drinking Water and Cold Milk
- We have fresh drinking water available for the children throughout the day and encourage the preschool children to be independent having access to our jugs or water canisters. We inform the children how to obtain the water at any time during the course of the day and encourage them to ask if they need any help.

Allergens and Dietary Needs

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, it is the parents' duty to inform Enchanted Wood of their child's dietary needs, including any allergies, dietary, cultural or religious needs. We will require care plans for all allergies from the doctor or dietician. Sadly, we are unable to cater for preferences and likes and dislikes. It is our role as early years educators to offer praise to the children and encourage them to try new things.
- We will display all allergies, dietary, cultural and religious needs of the child in their current room and also share with the team, this will be updated if something changes.
- All children with food allergies will have to complete a care plan- this will be discussed with the manger during settling in, or as and when an allergy becomes known. Foods, symptoms and medical action will be discussed at length, this will also be located in the child's room.
- The preschool is a complete NUT & SESAME FREE zone.

Supporting Breast/ Bottle Feeding and Weaning in Babies & Toddlers Infants aged 0-6 months

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first six months of a baby's life with continued breastfeeding throughout the first year, and after that for as long as the mother wishes to continue. Breastfeeding has long-term benefits for infants, and can decrease the risk of gastrointestinal, respiratory and middle ear infection.

We support mothers to breastfeed at nursery if they wish and encourage them to continue providing breastmilk for their baby whilst attending the setting.

Expressed breastmilk provided for babies must be clearly labelled, stored safely and used only for that child. Breastmilk should be stored in a sterilised container, and can be kept in the fridge for up to five days at 4°C or lower

Bottle feeding is a chance to feel close to your baby and get to know and bond with them. Babies will feel more secure if most feeds are given by you, your partner or their main caregiver. We will continue this special time making sure we hold the baby/ toddler, look into their eyes and talk to them as we feed them.

Bottles must be brought into preschool clean and sterilised (for babies under 12 months). Please ensure they are named. We will make up bottles as and when required in accordance with NHS guidelines.

Step-by-step guide to preparing a formula feed

Step 1: Fill the kettle with fresh tap water (do not use water that has been boiled before).

Step 2: Boil the water. Then leave the water to cool for no more than 30 minutes, so that it remains at a temperature of at least 70C.

Step 3: Ensure the surface you are going to use is clean and your hands are washed.

Step 4: Follow the manufacturer's instructions and pour the amount of water you need into the bottle. Double check that the water level is correct. Always put the water in the bottle first, while it is still hot, before adding the powdered formula.

Step 5: Loosely fill the scoop provided with formula powder ensuring level scoops, according to the manufacturer's instructions. (1 scoop for every 1 ounce of water.)

Step 6: Holding the edge of the teat, put it into the retaining ring, check it is secure, then screw the ring onto the bottle. Cover the teat with the cap and shake the bottle until the powder is dissolved.

Step 7: It's important to cool the formula so it's not too hot to drink. Do this by holding the bottle (with the lid on) under cold running water. Test the temperature of the formula on the inside of your wrist before giving it to the baby/ toddler. It should be body temperature, which means it should feel warm or cool, but not hot.

Step 8: If there is any made-up formula left in the bottle after a feed, throw it away.

We will rinse bottles out and return to you at the end of the day, so they can be sterilised at home.

Further reading: <https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/breastfeeding/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/bottle-feeding/advice/>



The Eating Environment and Social Aspects of Mealtimes

- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves, even in baby room children are encouraged to eat independently with finger foods and baby cutlery.
- As children grow we provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development, such as cups instead of beakers, and china plates instead of plastic to represent real home experiences, we also take into account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- Children are encouraged to sit together and to face one another around a table. We try to spread children in small groups across tables as this allows discussion and space for self-serving.
- The presence of an adult is also important to role model social behaviour during mealtimes, sharing table manners and table etiquette.
- Staff will sample foods alongside the children encouraging them to try new foods, flavours and colours (see our Fussy Eaters information, as many new foods can take up to 14-20 times to acquire the new flavours and tastes.)
- We give the children enough time to eat their food without rushing them to finish. We will encourage children to eat more, but never force a child to stay behind, as this will create a negative experience for the child and could lead to fussy eating. As a general guide the duration of most mealtimes is approx. 20 minutes.
- We understand that children may become hungry at different times of the day, so some children may like a big breakfast and eat a little lunch, or others may graze a little throughout the day.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

Food is an integral part of many celebrations and can be a wonderful way to teach children about cultural diversity and introduce unfamiliar tastes whilst continuing to support our healthy eating policy and ethos. By celebrating these events we introduce more variety into our meal times and promote a healthy approach to long-term eating habits.

We love to celebrate birthdays and special occasions in our setting, and parents may want to provide a cake, sweets or other sugar treats to help celebrate the occasion. While the occasional treat is fine, it is important that these are not more than once a week.

Fussy Eaters

Children often become more selective about the food they eat at around 18 months to 2 years. This is also when they start to become mobile. There is a theory that this fear of new food develops as an evolutionary response to protect little ones from eating potentially harmful or poisonous items.

Children also begin to find their voice and assert their independence. Children have control over few things in their lives, and one is if they eat or not! Children like this attention – whether it's positive or negative. Children's growth rate slows at 18 months- 2 years old, so toddlers begin to respond to their decreased appetite.

If you think there may be an underlying cause for your child's picky eating, please consult your doctor or health visitor, who will be able to take some growth and weight measurements to ensure they are still developing in line with their growth chart; they may feel it is appropriate to refer to a dietitian if there are concerns.

Did you know that a new food can take up to 14-20 times to be accepted? Keep offering the food, and don't give up until you've offered it at least 20 times. It might be helpful to keep a record of the food you've offered.

- Try not to rush this process.
- Introduce new foods gradually.
- Try one food at a time and offer a small portion such as one carrot stick or quarter of an apple. A large portion may put the child off trying.
- New foods should be offered on a separate plate and away from accepted foods; dividing plates are great for this.
- Involving your child in choosing and preparing foods can encourage their interest.
- Let them see different foods in different environments such as in the kitchen, at mealtimes, at nursery or school and in shops.
- Encourage your child to explore food through play. This will help them to become more familiar with the sensation of food and eating.

Further Reading:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/fussy-eaters/>

<https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/109514148/fussy-eating-booklet.pdf>



Learning About Nutrition through Food

Our preschool menu contains all of the nutrients your child needs to grow and develop. This is a crucial stage in a child's life as this is when they first form their food preferences and eating behaviours. Therefore, this provides nursery practitioners with the perfect opportunity to shape a child's eating for the better by introducing a range of nutrients, vitamins, and minerals.

It's our job to serve delicious meals that are packed with good things that children enjoy eating. This will encourage children to have a positive relationship with food which is vital for their mental and physical health. On top of providing a good nursery menu, we also provide ample opportunities for exercise and outdoor play, including the opportunities to learn and grow their own vegetables in forest school.

Further reading:

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>

Food Safety and Food Hygiene

Food will be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment. We will also teach about basic hygiene, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor, and the importance of washing hands with soap and warm water before eating meals or snacks and after going to the toilet or handling animals.

- All staff complete Food Hygiene training, Health and Safety training and First Aid training.
- The Local Authority Environmental Health Department inspect our premises annually to ensure we meet requirements and have received a 5* star rating.
- Staff will sit with children at all mealtimes to monitor choke hazards and set a positive example of using cutlery and sitting at tables whilst eating.
- We will notify Ofsted in writing within 14 days in the event of any food poisoning incident affecting two or more children in the setting.

Oral Hygiene

We encourage you to start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as the first milk tooth breaks through. Parents or carers should brush the children's teeth twice daily for about two minutes with fluoride toothpaste. One of these should be just before bedtime.

We encourage you to take your child to the dentist when their first milk teeth appear, this is so they become familiar with the environment and get to know the dentist. The dentist can advise you on how to prevent decay and identify any oral health problems at an early stage. Just opening up the child's mouth for the dentist to take a look at is useful practice for the future. When you visit the dentist, be positive about it and make the trip fun, this will stop your child worrying about future visits. Ensure you take your child for regular dental check-ups every six months.

Further reading:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-teeth-and-gums/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/>

Vitamin supplements for children aged one to four years

Government recommends:

- Breastfed infants from birth to one year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10µg of vitamin D, to make sure they get enough.
- Formula fed infants should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day as infant formula is fortified with vitamin D.
- Children aged one to four years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D

In addition to vitamin D advice, the government also recommends that children aged from six months to five years are given daily vitamin supplements containing vitamins A (233µg) and C (20mg). This is a precautionary measure to ensure that their nutritional requirements are met at an age during which it is difficult to be certain that their diet is a consistently reliable source.

Families who qualify for the Healthy Start scheme are eligible to receive free vitamin drops for children from six months until their fourth birthday, as well as free vitamin supplements for pregnant women and women with a child under 12 months. In some areas vitamins are free to all families and information about this can be obtained from a health visitor. Food vouchers are also available under the Healthy Start scheme and can be used to purchase plain cows' milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, or for infants; first infant formula.

It is the responsibility of parents to give these vitamin supplements to children, but settings can help support families by highlighting this advice, and by encouraging families who may be eligible to apply for Healthy Start.

You can apply online following this link: <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/>



Sustainability of foods

As a preschool we can help make a positive contribution to the economy and environment by considering how the food we use is grown, stored, prepared and used. We can also play an important role in teaching children about seasonality and sustainability (how food used meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs).

We collect and deliver Food Bank donations throughout the year and also take part in Harvest Festival celebrations with our older children to re-enforce the importance and value of staple, land-grown foods and also to help them to make connections with our local area and to consider those families who may be in need of our support.

Local Food Bank information:

Bexley

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/bexley/>

Dartford

<https://www.dartfordfoodbank.co.uk/>

Appendix 1:

Early years food choking hazards



Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/> and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>