

Mitcham Preschool Centre Nutrition Policy

Statement of Intent:

In line with the DECD initiative (*Right Bite* strategy) our aim is to promote healthy eating ideals amongst preschool children.

“Healthy eating supports children’s learning, health & well being”

The Mitcham Preschool Centre believes that childhood and adolescence are important times for establishing life-long, healthy eating habits. In support of this, we encourage children to eat healthy foods at our Preschool and therefore ask that parents/carers send healthy foods for them to eat. Healthy eating habits can benefit children in three ways:

- **SHORT TERM:** provides children with important vitamins and minerals to maximize growth and development.
- **LONG TERM:** encourages a taste for healthy foods and promotes healthy eating habits which minimize the risk of diet related diseases later in life.
- Good nutrition contributes to good health and wellbeing and this is vital for positive engagement in learning activities.

Through this policy our goals are to:

- 1. Promote knowledge and awareness of the importance of good food and nutrition to children, families and carers of the Preschool.**
- 2. Promote safe eating practices and food related activities.**
- 3. Foster healthy, social, emotional, physical and cultural development.**

The strategies used to achieve these goals will be:

- 1. Promote knowledge and awareness of the importance of good food and nutrition to children, families and carers of the Preschool.**

1.1. Education and promotion to parents and carers

- Pamphlets, posters around the Preschool
- Newsletters

1.2. Education and Information to children

- interactive cooking sessions
- food and nutrition related play activities. We talk about eating food at Preschool that helps us in our learning and playing. We do not talk to the children about “good” or “bad” food, instead “everyday food” healthy food and “sometimes food”.
- food sharing days where foods brought are cut up, shared and discussed
- growing foods in the Preschool’s garden
- Educator’s role model

1.3. Regulate the types of food allowed at the centre on both full days and half days.

The foods have been based on the following criteria:

- Nutritional value low in salt, sugar, fats and preservatives
- Reflects the 5 Food Groups in the circle on the '*Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*'
- Reflects the Right Bite Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for SA Schools and Preschools, Government of South Australia (see www.decd.sa.gov.au/eatwellsa/files/links/RightBiteFoodSpectrum.pdf)
- Children are not allowed to bring 'any foods that are on the Sometimes' list (with the exception of *Special Occasions* refer 3.3)

1.3.1 Suggested EVERYDAY foods at the Preschool are those foods identified as GREEN on the "*Right Bite Food and Drink Spectrum*". This is food that is eaten as near as possible to its natural state, with minimal processing-

- Fruit – fresh or dried
- Vegetables (eg carrot, celery, capsicum, cucumber)
- Savoury sandwiches (eg vegemite, ham, fritz, cheese)
- Wraps
- Vegemite scrolls
- Cheese
- Rice cakes, rice crackers (plain flavours)
- Sushi rolls,
- Tinned tuna, lean meats
- Eggs

Please note: We recommend brown, rye and wholemeal bread and wraps are highly recommended as a source of fibre.

Please note: We acknowledge the increased popularity of "Superfoods" (a marketing term used to describe foods with supposed health benefits). The Preschool promotes eating a variety of wholefoods (food that is eaten as near as possible to its natural state, with minimal processing), rather than following current food trends.

1.3.2 Foods identified as AMBER on the '*Right Bite Food & Drink Spectrum*' are generally high in preservatives and contain too many kilojoules at the expense of the fresh choices that students need for health and vitality. The introduction of some healthier choices within the AMBER range to the Preschool broadens the variety of choice for students whilst ensuring that the nutritional value remains high and the inclusion of preservatives is minimised. As children are at Preschool for 6 hours on full days, they need to be able to have part of their dairy intake requirement.

The Preschool therefore allows children to bring:

- Yoghurt (ONLY to be eaten as part of lunch)
- Zucchini slice or frittata

1.3.3 Excluded SOMETIMES foods are the following foods identified as AMBER & RED foods on the “*Right Bite Food & Drink* ‘Spectrum’”. These foods are more processed, energy dense and nutrition poor and include:

- Chocolate
- Muesli bars
- Potato or corn chips
- Lollies or sweet biscuits
- Fruit leathers eg. roll up
- Foods containing more than 10% sugar
- Foods containing more than 5% fat
- Popcorn
- Cakes
- Muffins (savory and sweet)
- Packaged and processed food such as cheese and dip packages

Excluded drinks are:

- Cordials
- Soft drinks
- Milk drinks
- Fruit drinks or juice

1.3.4 Nude food (ie Unpackaged or with minimal packaging) is the preferred option and is encouraged where possible.

1.4 Water is the preferred drink.

- Water bottles are encouraged
- Water cooler available

2. Promote safe eating practices and healthy behaviours.

2.1 Food Hygiene practices will be observed and role modelled:

2.1.1 Children are expected to wash their hands before and after eating or food handling

2.1.2 Hands are washed after touching non hygienic items eg. animals

2.1.3 Refrigeration facilities are NOT available for lunches. Parents/carers will therefore need to supply adequate alternatives for lunch boxes in warm weather eg iceblocks, insulated lunch bags etc.

2.2 Minimise choking risk

2.2.1 Children are seated while eating away from play areas

2.2.2 Foods that are at risk for causing choking will be communicated to parents via newsletters, pamphlets and information sessions. For example: yoghurts or pureed fruits in squeeze packs with small lids are a potential choking hazard and are not allowed.

2.3 Special dietary needs

2.3.1 It is the parents/ carers responsibility to notify the Preschool if their child has a special need.

2.4 NUT FREE ZONE

- Anaphylaxis is a life threatening condition caused by extreme allergic reaction to nuts
- Due to this lethality of nut allergies the Preschool is a **nut free zone**.
- No foods containing nuts or traces of nuts are permitted.
- For further information, please see the Preschool's Allergy Aware ("Nut Free") Policy.

2.5 Flexible Eating

- Our snack time is a flexible time when children are encouraged to decide for themselves when they want to eat.
- We do not stop them from playing so they can all eat together.
- There are times when children are not hungry, or when they are working productively and don't want to stop, or when they want to wait and eat with a friend.
- We do however remind them that they can have their snack whenever they like and generally we remind them near the end of the session, that if they want their snack, they need to have it before pack up time.
- Children are not able to have their snack once we have started to pack up, so if they tell you they weren't allowed to eat it, that may be the reason why. We expect children to ask if they need help.

3. Foster healthy, social, emotional, physical and cultural development.

3.1 Promote independent self-feeding by ensuring foods provided to the children can be open and consumed without assistance.

3.2 Promote cultural appreciation by:

3.2.1 Role playing

3.2.2 Cooking session of multicultural foods

3.2.3 Bilingual worker if applicable and available

3.2.4 Involve parents of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (CALD) in the Preschool's activities.

3.3 Special occasions

3.3.1 During each term, we have special occasions such as excursions and celebration days where we will have a choice of having "sometimes" and "everyday" food. We want children to learn that if we have regular healthy eating habits, the occasional treat is ok.

3.3.2 These are foods from the RED segment on the '*Right Bite Food & Drink*' Spectrum and are only permitted on a maximum of two occasions per term.

3.3.3 Any foods provided must be nut free.

3.3.4 Birthdays.

Children's birthdays are celebrated with a "Happy Birthday" song and a pretend cake with candles. **Please do not send birthday cakes or other birthday food treats to Preschool.**

3.4 Fundraising should aim to use foods that fit in with the healthy eating guidelines outlined in this policy.

Approved: Governing Council Chairperson

Approved: Mitcham Preschool Director