

Nutrition



All children require a variety of foods to provide the necessary energy to sustain their high levels of activity. Caregivers must understand the importance of good nutrition for children as many children receive the majority of their daily nutritional requirements in the Caregiver's home.

Parents and Caregivers should work together to ensure that children are receiving a balanced diet everyday.

Requirements specific to Home Child Care:

- Caregivers will plan meals and snacks that are appropriate for the children's ages and developmental levels.
- Children who require special food for religious or health reasons will have the special foods provided by the parent.
- Children who are on a specialized diet because of food allergies or food restrictions will have clear written instructions that include foods that are permissible for the child and foods that are restricted (see Food Allergies in this section).
- Infants will have a written schedule for food and drink that will be updated regularly by the child's parents. Infant food and drink will be provided by the parent until the child is able to eat table foods. **Infant bottles and jars of food must be labelled with the child's name.**

A Caregiver who understands Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating will not have any difficulty meeting these requirements. Using the information in this section and working with the Home Child Care Caseworker will help you to plan meals for the children in your care. Periodically, the Home Child Care program offers workshops or evening meetings to give new ideas for menu planning and up-to-date nutrition information.

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The Day Nurseries Act specifies the amount of food which must be served to children in care for six hours or more. Although these requirements were not based on the new Food Guide, they are still in effect until further notice.

The provisions of the Day Nurseries Act allow for the wide variation in food intake. Such variation is natural, and occurs both between children, and from day to day for an individual child. By planning your menus to meet the requirements of the Act, you will be providing food which will help children meet a significant portion of their nutritional needs. The remainder of their nutritional needs are the responsibility of their parents.

The Day Nurseries Act requires that the following **total amount** of food be provided each day to children less than six years of age but more than one year old, who are in care for six hours or longer:

Food Group	# Servings
Milk Products	2
Meat & Alternatives	1
Grain Products	3 - 4
Vegetables & Fruit	4 - 5

Serving sizes are described in **Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating**. Young children often cannot eat a full serving, and must eat smaller portions of food more frequently. This manual contains sample menu plans for children aged 1, 2 and 3, and 4 years of age. These plans illustrate how the nutritional needs of children in care can be met.

Note that these plans are only **samples**, and that they describe foods as offered. What individual children will eat, however, is highly variable. Children should be allowed to determine how much they will eat.

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Creating a Positive Meal Time Environment

Consider both the physical and emotional atmosphere that you are creating for meal times.

Physical Setting

- Make the surroundings cheerful.
- Provide comfortable seating arrangements.
- Use child size dishes, and small tables and chairs or appropriate highchairs and booster seats.
- Have the children wash their hands before the meal is served.
- Let the children participate in the meal time as much as possible. Children could plan the menu, set the table, serve the food and/or wash the table afterwards.
- Children should bring a toothbrush from home.
- Post the menus for parents to see. (See Record Keeping Section for sample menu and activity plan).
- Serve meals at regular meal times.

Emotional Atmosphere

Meal times should be a pleasant experience! Problems that may occur are dealt with below, and hopefully by knowing how to handle them, meal times can be happy.

- Adults should eat with the children. They can set a good example for the children to model.
- Allow the child a quiet activity time just before meal time to give him an opportunity to relax.
- Avoid conflict over food. A pleasant atmosphere is as important for healthy eating as is the proper food. Encourage interesting conversation at the table.
- If a child dawdles, do not hurry him or become angry. Simply give the child enough time to eat and then in a quiet, friendly manner take the plate away. It may also help to start feeding slow eaters first.
- Avoid using dessert as a reward. Dessert is an integral part of the meal and should be as nutritious as the rest of the foods in the meal. Therefore, there is no reason to single it out.
- Never force a child to eat. If a child refuses to eat, it is best to remove the food without becoming upset.
- Children sometimes favour a single food. Be casual and allow children to have time to decide for themselves that they want other foods.
- Offer children a choice of foods.

Snacking

Snacks are very important when considering the food intake of a preschooler and the hearty appetites of the school age child. Snacks contribute a large proportion of nutrients and calories to the diet. Preschoolers have a small capacity for storing food, and therefore need to eat more often. Their high energy output also makes snacks very necessary.

Snacks serve many functions. They fulfill a nutritional and social need and also can be used as an ideal learning experience. Snack time should be informal, fun and introduce a wide variety of new foods. Snack time for the school child is an important social experience.

Try to serve a snack at least two hours before the next meal. When planning snack time, you should strongly consider the nutrient content of the foods served.

Step 1. Snack Nutritiously

Nutritious snacks are wholesome foods like milk, cheese, fruits, vegetables, breads, cereals, meats or nuts.

Step 2. Limit the Number of Snacks Each Day

Provide 2 to 3 small snacks per day if your child is hungry or thirsty.

Step 3. Change the Snacking Menu Daily

Variety can ensure that your child gets the nutrients he or she needs without too much sugar or fat.

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Common Eating Problems...And How To Cope

Common Eating Problems	As Your Child Sees It	As You May See It	And How To Cope
Refusal to eat	I'm not hungry. I'm sick. I've found a new way to get attention.	I must make him eat, growing children need food.	Respect the wisdom of your child's own body. A skipped meal will not hurt a healthy child, so remove the food without fuss after a reasonable length of time (20-30 minutes). Involve your child in food shopping, preparation and serving, for example, pouring her own milk, making sandwiches, setting the table.
Food jags: getting hooked on one food	I've found a wonderful new food. I've found a way to manipulate my mother.	I must make sure she eats a sensible diet.	Food jags aren't unusual in children or adults and won't last long if no issue is made of them.
Dislike of new foods	I don't like the taste of this food. I don't want to try anything new today.	I like this food. I think my child should learn to like it too, and should adjust to our family's eating patterns.	Children, like adults, will have a few dislikes. If you have time, a substitute food from the same food group may be offered. If the dislike is treated casually, your child will probably learn to like it at a later date.

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Common Eating Problems...And How To Cope (continued)

Common Eating Problems	As Your Child Sees It	As You May See It	And How To Cope
Rejection of vegetables	I don't like the texture or smell of cooked vegetables. Daddy never eats them. I'm bored with having the same one over and over again.	I think my child should eat cooked vegetables as part of a sensible diet.	It doesn't matter whether the vegetables are eaten cooked or raw. Just be sure they are not overcooked. Children often prefer the bright colours and crisp textures of raw vegetables. Vegetable juices are another alternative. Remember children are the world's best imitators. Your likes are quickly noticed - and copied.
Dawdling, or playing with foods	I want to explore this food. I need time to get used to these utensils. I'm not hungry. I'm too tired.	I don't think children should play with their food.	A child needs time to learn to use utensils. If you're a fast eater you might occasionally take the time to eat slowly with your child. You might begin feeding your child a few minutes before the rest of the family. Children learn by touching - give them time to explore food.
Overeating	I get approval and attention from the family when I eat a lot. Everyone else asks for seconds.	When he's good I reward him with a cookie. He'll outgrow his baby fat. A child should learn to clean his plate.	Reduce portion sizes. Don't force your child to take "just one more bite" or "clean his plate". Learn to prepare foods without adding extra energy - avoid sauces, breading or frying. Encourage more physical activity. Use a few kind words, a hug, a game, a toy, etc., as rewards and comforters rather than food.

Table adapted from "Food for Little Folk" - a British Columbia Ministry of Health Publication

What the Child Care Caregiver Needs to Know

What is a Food Allergy?

All allergies involve the immune system, the same system which defends us from viruses and germs. An allergic reaction to a food occurs when the body mistakes that food for an enemy. The body then creates proteins called **antibodies** which search for the food particles, and then release chemicals that try to destroy the food particles.

These chemicals also affect other parts of the body, causing the uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous symptoms of an allergic reaction. Note that allergic reactions to a food will not take place the first time the food is eaten, since the body has to have encountered the food in order to form antibodies to it.

The part of the food that sets off the chain of allergic events is called an **allergen**. Most allergens are proteins. Virtually all foods contain some protein, and therefore have the potential for triggering an allergic reaction. However, most allergic reactions to food are triggered by these six foods:

- cow's milk & dairy products
- wheat
- soy
- egg
- nuts / peanuts
- shellfish

Some people worry that they or their children react to food additives. When these claims are carefully checked by reliable health professionals, they usually cannot be proven.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of a Food Allergy?

Most Common Reactions

Reactions range in severity from uncomfortable to life-threatening. Some allergic reactions happen within minutes of eating the problem food, while others take an hour or more to appear. Foods do not usually cause reactions **many** hours or days later.

(For more detailed information - contact your Home Child Care Caseworker/See Healthy Children Manual)

Three Ways to Prevent Food Poisoning

1. Temperature Control
2. Eliminate Cross-Contamination
3. Hand washing

1. Temperature Control

Temperatures between 4°C and 60°C allow rapid bacterial growth. Keep hot foods hot; 60°C or greater. Keep cold foods cold; 5°C or less.

Helpful tips to prevent bacterial growth during the various stages of food preparation:

Thaw Foods

- in a refrigerator below 4°C
- in a flowing water bath where the water temperature is 21°C or less
- in a microwave oven, provided it will be cooked immediately

Cook Foods

- thoroughly and check internal food temperatures with a probe thermometer to ensure the prescribed internal temperature has been achieved

Hot/Cold Food

- in a pre-heated steam table

Holding

- in a refrigerated cold unit

Cool Foods

- in shallow pans in a refrigerator below 4°C
- in a cold water bath while stirring

Reheat Foods

- in an oven
- on top of a stove
- in a microwave oven
- to a minimum internal temperature of 74°C

Note

It is important when cooling and reheating foods that this be done quickly so that bacterial growth on the food is prevented or severely limited.

2. Cross-Contamination

Cross-contamination refers to the contamination of a food from another food, from a utensil/surface to a food or from an infected worker to a food.

- Use separate cutting boards when preparing raw and cooked meats and vegetables.
- Use separate knives/utensils when cutting or scooping different foods.
- Avoid contact between raw foods and cooked/ready-to-eat foods.
- Use separate cloths for wiping food contact surfaces and keep dampened with a sanitizing solution.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize all immovable equipment such as meat slicers, mixers, and work tables.
- Avoid hand contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash dishes and utensils in the approved manner - in a dishwasher, or, the wash-rinse-sanitize technique.

3. Hand Washing

Hand washing is the single most important means to prevent the spread of infection/micro-organisms. Hand washing should be done thoroughly and often using soap and warm running water.

Remember to wash hands:

- before preparing food
- after handling raw meats/poultry
- after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose
- after using the washroom
- after touching garbage or soiled work surfaces
- or whenever your hands are dirty