

	Policy
	Policy Category: Health and Safety
	Date Created: September 2019
	Reviewed: January 2021
	Policy Name: Food Policy

The purpose of this operational policy is to keep children and adults safe by meeting Licensing Criteria HS19, HS20, HS21, HS22, HS23, PF15, MOH 2020 (Reducing food-related choking in babies and young children at early learning services) and requirements under the Food Act 2014.

Position Statement

At this centre we ensure that children receive nutritional food at an appropriate time to meet their health needs and in a safe manner. We are also committed to ensuring a high level of hygiene is maintained while preparing, serving and storing food. We keep records of the food served. Where food is provided by parents, the service encourages and promotes healthy eating guidelines.

Issue Outline

ECE centres have an obligation to uphold the health, safety and wellbeing of children by ensuring the service meets their nutritional needs of children in their care or alternatively encourages parents to do so. ECE centres also have an obligation to ensure that teachers know how to prepare and handle food safely.

Detail

General:

Our centre takes into account the full nutritional needs of children and tailors this for children under the age of two. We also ask parents to declare any known allergies on their enrolment form. We adhere to the following licensing criteria requirements:

- **HS19:** Food is served at appropriate times to meet the nutritional needs of each child while they are attending. Where food is provided by the service, it is of sufficient variety, quantity, and quality to meet these needs.
- **HS20:** Food is prepared, served and stored hygienically;
- **HS21:** An ample supply of water that is fit to drink is available to children at all times, and older children are able to access this water independently;
- **HS22:** Children are supervised while eating;
- **HS23:** Under-2 year olds and Infants under the age of 6 months and other children unable to drink independently are held semi-upright when being fed. Any infant milk food given to a child under the age of 12 months is supplied by the child's parent.
- **PF15:** a designated place set aside for the children to sit and eat.
- **MOH 2020:** provide a safe physical environment when eating, first aid available and provide appropriate food.

1. **Take the following actions to provide a safe physical environment for babies and children while they are eating:**

- Supervise babies and children when they are eating.
- Have an appropriate ratio of adults to children at mealtimes.
- Minimise distractions and encourage children to focus on eating.
- Ensure there is a designated time where children sit down to eat, rather than continuous grazing.
- Ask children not to talk with their mouths full.
- Have children sit up straight when they are eating. Sitting down and maintaining good posture are essential for safe eating and drinking. Do not allow walking, running or playing while children are eating.
- Place food directly in front of the child. This helps to prevent them twisting around to the left or right, which can cause them to lose control of the food in their mouth.

2. **First Aid**

- Some teachers and kaiako must know what to do if a baby or child is choking.
- Teachers and kaiako need to know choking first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- For more information see the *Well Child/Tamariki Ora Programme Practitioner Handbook* available on the Ministry of Health website (www.health.govt.nz).

3. **Providing appropriate food**

Research shows that some food poses a greater risk of choking on. To reduce the risk, early learning services should remove high-risk foods and change the texture or size and shape of others.

3a. High-risk food to exclude

Exclude the following foods. They have the highest risk of choking on, and are either not practical to alter, have no or minimal nutritional value, or both:

- whole or pieces of nuts
- large seeds, like pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- hard or chewy sweets or lollies
- crisps or chippies
- hard rice crackers
- dried fruit
- sausages, saveloys and cheerios
- popcorn
- marshmallows.

The following table shows which foods to alter, why and how to do it for different age groups.

Information on appropriate food textures for newborns to one-year-olds is consistent with the Ministry of Health complementary feeding advice. See Eating for Healthy Babies and Toddlers

3b. To reduce the risk of choking, the following foods need to be altered (as per table below):

How to alter high-risk food to lower its choking risk

Food characteristics	Examples	Choking risk	Changes to reduce risk	
			1–3 years old	4–6 years old
Small hard food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pieces of raw carrot, apple or celery 	Difficult for young children to bite through and break down enough to swallow safely. Pieces can become stuck in children’s airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. Cook until soft¹ and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare as for 1–3 years. Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (approximately 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
Small round or oval food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit with stones and large seeds or large pips like watermelon Grapes, large berries, cherry tomatoes Raw green peas 	Small round foods can lodge in children’s airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove stones and large seeds or large pips. Quarter or finely chop grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller (about half the width of a standard dinner fork). Cook and squash with a fork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halve or quarter grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes Whole cooked green peas are acceptable.

¹ 'Soft' means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.

Food characteristics	Examples	Choking risk	Changes to reduce risk		
			1–3 years old	4–6 years old	
Food with skin or leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Lettuce and other raw salad leaves, spinach, cabbage • Stone fruit (eg, plums, peaches, nectarines) • Apples and pears • Tomatoes 	Food skins are difficult to chew and can completely seal children’s airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove skin from chicken. • Finely slice or chop salad leaves, spinach and cabbage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. • Cook until soft² and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as for 1–3 years. • Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
Compressible foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pieces of cooked meat 	Can fit into the shape of the airway and get wedged tightly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook meat until very tender. • Choose mince, shred or chop meat to 8mm x 8mm sized pieces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as for 1–3 years; or offer thin strips of meat (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand or with a fork. 	
Food with bones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish • Chicken nibbles 	Small bones present a choking risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove all bones. 		
Thick pastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nut or seed butter 	Can fit to the shape of a child’s airway or stick to side of airway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use smooth thick pastes sparingly, spreading thinly and evenly onto bread. 		
Fibrous or stringy food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw pineapple 	Fibres make it difficult for children to break up the food into smaller pieces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peel the skin or strong fibres off where possible. • Slice these foods thinly across the grain of fibres. 		

² 'Soft' means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.

Special events such as birthday celebrations – the centre will provide the cake and any other food required for celebrations.

No food should be brought into the centre, unless it is for dietary requirements and any food should meet our current food guidelines.

All foods to be eaten at specific mealtimes within centre routines.

Our centre keeps a record of all food served during the service's hours of operation. Our records show the type of food provided and are available for inspection for three months after the food is served.

We have set meal times but make allowances for children who are demonstrably hungry or for medical/personal reasons, require a specialised diet and eating time.

Our centre is guided by a range of resources available to help ECE services make healthy and informed choices about food provided to children, and to encourage parents to do the same.

We are a nut free centre.

There will be times that children will be included in the preparation of food as a curriculum related activity. Where this occurs, all the above precautions will be taken.

A list of children with their specific dietary/allergy needs is displayed, in both the kitchen and classrooms areas so the teachers are informed.

Food Act 2014

Food Safety Training and Competency

New kitchen staff and teachers undergo a food safety induction before they prepare food.

Readily perishable food

Potentially hazardous food is food that will support the growth of harmful microbes (poultry for example³). The cook follows safe food handling practices whenever potentially hazardous food is handled, stored, and transported to ensure it remains safe and suitable as is required by the Food Act 2014.

We provide a full meal service that includes readily perishable food and is prepared by a designated cook. We therefore are subject to a National Programme 2 under the Food Act 2014. The requirements under a National Programme 2 (receiving, storing, cooking, cooling and reheating perishable food) are outlined in the Food Act 2014 Check List and Record Sheet.

Other Policies

This policy aligns with the Food Act 2014 check list and record sheets.

Relevant Background (including legislation/regulation references)

Licensing Criteria 2008, Health and Safety Regulations and associated criteria.

³ Some foods become potentially hazardous when modified or altered. Dry custard powder is not potentially hazardous, you can store it in the cupboard. However, once it is mixed with water it becomes potentially hazardous, you need to refrigerate it. A can of beef stew becomes potentially hazardous and must be refrigerated once opened.

- HS19: a record of all food served during the service's hours of operation (other than that provided by parents for their own children). Records show the type of food provided, and are available for inspection for 3 months after the food is served.
- HS20, HS21, HS22, HS23, PF15 and requirements under the Food Act 2014.
- [NZ Heart Foundation – loading up the lunchbox \[PDF; 622kb\]](#)
- The Ministry of Health has produced a publication on [healthy nutrition for babies and toddlers](#) and [Nutritional Guidelines for healthy children](#)
- There is a list of resources on [Food and Nutrition including information on allergies \[Word; 164kb\]](#).
- <http://www.healthed.govt.nz/resources>

Food Act 2014

- <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/policy-law/food-act-2014/overview.htm>
- http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0032/latest/DLM2995811.html?search=ta_act_Fac%40ainf%40anif_an%40bn%40rn_25_a&p=4

Ministry of Health 2020

- [Reducing food – related choking for babies and children at early learning services](#)

Alignment with the Centre Philosophy

This policy ensures a healthy and safe environment, a crucial part of creating and maintaining the well-being of children in our care.

Implications and/or Risks

Failure to implement this policy correctly could cause a child in our centre to become seriously ill and damage the reputation of our centre to provide a safe place for children. It could also cause our centre to be fined under the Food Act 2014.

Implementation

Teachers are aware of this policy and are trained accordingly. We will consult, when required to ensure that at this centre we can guarantee that children receive nutritional food to meet their health needs and in a safe manner.

Review

Review annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

Authorised:	
Date:	
Review Date:	
Consultation Undertaken:	

