

## Planning Nutritious Meals and Snacks



In this classroom, children learn about nutrition both directly and indirectly. For instance, the variety of foods served and the teacher's comments about the food are direct learning experiences. Children learn about many types of food and that mealtime is a pleasant time. The positive attitudes and pleasing surroundings of the lunchroom are indirect learning experiences.

## Planning Nutritious Meals and Snacks

By watching friends and teachers, children develop habits and attitudes about food. Many of their food attitudes and behaviors will last into adulthood. Hopefully, they will establish a lifelong pattern of eating a nutritious diet.



## Planning Nutritious Meals and Snacks

Proper nutrition is needed for children's health, growth, and development. Behavior and learning ability is related to nutrition.

Teaching children about nutrition will be an important responsibility for you as a child care professional.



Some studies suggest that young children who have learned healthful food choices may experience lifelong health benefits.

## Planning Nutritious Meals and Snacks



Nutrition is the most important part of a well-planned menu.

However, many other factors also contribute to a well-planned menu. For instance, scale serving sizes to the children's appetites. Children manage best with small servings. Their appetites often vary from day to day.



## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits

### Be sensitive to children's needs:

- Try to understand each child's personality and reactions to food.
- Serve age-appropriate portions. Dish out child portions instead of adult portions.
- Use child-sized tables, chairs, dishes, glasses, silverware, and serving utensils that young children can handle.



## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits



### Help children feel ready to eat:

- Provide a short transition time between activities and mealtimes.
- Tell children a few minutes ahead of time that it will soon be time to eat. This helps them slow down and get ready.

## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits

**Provide some activities that will help them slow down, such as:**

- coloring or drawing
- playing with blocks
- listening to soft music
- reading a story
- talking about the meal



## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits

### Get children interested and involved:

- Encourage children to participate in mealtime. With your careful supervision, invite them to help with:
  - ✓ setting the table
  - ✓ bringing food to the table
  - ✓ clearing and cleaning the table after eating
- Before the children sit down at the table, discuss the foods that will be served.
- Encourage children to do as much as possible for themselves. First efforts are an important step toward growth.
- Initiate nutrition education activities.

## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits

### **Make eating a pleasure:**

- Serve meals in a bright and attractive room.
- Select and arrange food on plates in ways that make meals interesting and attractive.
- To make meals interesting, include a variety of colors, flavors, textures, and shapes.
- Differences in temperature can also add interest—for example, crisp, cool, raw vegetables can be a nice contrast to a warm soup.
- Set a good example. Eat at the table with the children and encourage conversation.
- Encourage the children to talk about their food experiences; how the food tastes and smells.

## Encouraging Favorable Food Attitudes and Good Eating Habits



### Foster positive feelings:

- Allow children to leave food on their plates. They may learn to overeat if they are told to finish their meals or clean their plates.
- Plan plenty of time to allow children to eat without feeling rushed.
- Avoid allowing children to use food to gain special attention.
- Never use food as a reward or punishment.

## Beverages

Beverages are the liquids we drink.

Today, there is a wide variety of fluid choices. If not selected carefully, beverages can add significant calories to children's diets without adding nutrients.



## Beverages



Water is the best beverage choice for children between meals, including at snack time. Water satisfies thirst without adding calories that could lead to weight gain. It also helps prevent dental caries by decreasing the amount of acid in the mouth.

Meals should include 1% or skim milk for children over age 2, with water or 100% juice served at snacks.



## Beverages

**Drinking water should be available at all times for self-serve, both indoors and outdoors.**

Children play hard and need enough fluid to stay well hydrated. When water is available within easy reach, it will be looked to first to satisfy thirst. Children often do not know when they are thirsty and should be encouraged to drink throughout the day. Encouraging sips of water between meals helps to reduce thirst. Children are then able to focus on foods at mealtimes, rather than filling up on milk before eating their meal.



## Beverage Tips

- Find creative ways to have water within reach to children.
- Try child-size water coolers or keep pitchers of ice water and small paper cups in classrooms.
- Encourage children to drink water when coming inside from the playground, before or after activities or using the bathroom, and between meals or when a child is still thirsty.
- Avoid spills by filling water pitchers only part way, by using pitchers with lids, and by helping younger children to pour water.



## Beverage Tips

- Routinely offer water.
- Encourage all children over one year of age to drink at least one cup of water each day.
- Show children that adults in the facility like to drink water too.
- Make it more fun. Give children fun straws to drink water.
- Add lemon, lime or orange slices to water to make it tastier for children.
- Let parents know that your facility uses water as the first choice for thirst.
- Encourage parents to offer water at home.

## Juice

**100% juice should be offered no more than three times a week.**



The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that preschool age children drink no more than 4 to 6 ounces of 100% fruit juice each day. In small amounts, juice is a healthy choice for children, but they tend to drink it in place of water. If consumed in excess, children tend to fill up on juice and may eat less of more nutritious foods during meals and snacks. Too much juice may also provide more calories than needed and expose children's teeth to a lot of sugar.

## Milk

**Only skim or 1% milk should be served to children age 2 and older.**



Milk is an excellent source of calcium, protein and other nutrients, essential to the healthy growth and development of children. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports drinking of low-fat and skim milk by children ages 2 years and older. These milk choices have as much calcium and vitamin D as whole or 2% milk without the extra fat, cholesterol and calories.

## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk

Only pasteurized milk or pasteurized milk products can be served to children in your care.

Nondairy milk substitutes may be served only with written permission of the child's parent for children over the age of twelve months.



## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk

The amount of required milk fat in the milk product is determined by the child's age:

**If the age of the child is under 12 months:**

Full strength formula or full strength breast milk unless there are specific written instructions from a licensed health care provider.



## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk



The amount of required milk fat in the milk product is determined by the child's age:

**If the age of the child is between 12 and 24 months:**

Full strength whole milk or breast milk unless there are specific written instructions from a licensed health care provider.



## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk



The amount of required milk fat in the milk product is determined by the child's age:

**If the age of the child over 24 months:**

With or without fat content of provider's or parent's choice.

## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk



Cow's milk is a significant source of nutrients that are important for growth in children over twelve months of age. Milk substitutes for children over twelve months may be served with parent permission.

Children between twelve and twenty-four months of age should consume whole milk and children over the age of twenty-four months can consume whole milk or lower fat milk.

## Regulations Regarding Serving Milk



Because the typical American diet has a high fat content, it is usually recommended that children over the age of twenty-four months consume lower fat milks such as 1% (low fat) milk or non-fat milk as a means to lower the total fat content of the diet.

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