

## 09 Early years practice procedures

### 9.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes (older children)

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff and where possible should be sitting facing children whilst they are eating so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and also prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions. A member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is always present at mealtimes and there is a person (who prepares the snack) responsible for ensuring that the food provided meets each child's needs.

#### **Snack times**

- A 'snack' is prepared mid-morning and mid-afternoon, and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager (e.g. picnic on a blanket).
- Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
- Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
- Biscuits should not be offered, but toast, rice cakes or oatcakes are good alternatives.
- Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough. Children are not made to leave their play if they do not want to have a snack.
- Staff join in conversation and encourage children's independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit, etc.

#### **Mealtimes**

- Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
- Children are always within sight and hearing of staff at mealtimes and where possible sitting facing them while they are eating.
- There is a Paediatric First Aider present at children's meal and snack times.
- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are encouraged to try new foods slowly.
- In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.

- If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and adults.
- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parents' notice board or on the website, including:
  - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers [https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR\\_toddler\\_booklet\\_green.pdf](https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf)
  - Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens