



## Healthy Eating Policy

### Policy Statement:

**Riverside Childcare** believes that good health and good food in the early years helps to safeguard children's well-being throughout their lives. It is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age for both the pleasure of having a wide variety in their diets and gaining knowledge about nutrition.

Our meal times are treated as an opportunity for **social interaction** as well as laying the foundations about **making healthy choices**.

This Healthy Eating Policy is communicated to all Parents and Guardians.

### **Principle:**

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Department of Health Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Services 2006 and Tusla's Quality Regulatory Framework.

### Policy:

Food and drink provided by **Riverside Childcare** is nutritious and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of all children. Storage and preparation of food complies with HACCP requirements. Staff are trained in food handling and safety.

Food is only purchased from reputable suppliers who comply with food safety practices.

All our meal and snack times are treated as a social occasion, tables are set up with the help of the children, with table cloths, appropriate cutlery and cups depending on the age and abilities of the children. Staff sit with children during meal and snack times.

### **Our healthy eating policy is based on the following:**

- We offer a wide variety of foods in Riverside Childcare
- Our food and drinks provided are nutritious and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the children (once these have been communicated to us written on reg. forms)
- We offer healthy food choices and tooth-friendly drinks frequently
- We accommodate special food needs of individual children (once communicated)
- We plan healthy, varied meals and snacks
- We help children learn to eat healthily
- We foster good dental health
- Parents will be supported to continue breastfeeding their children.
- Infants will be held upright while bottle feeding. No bottles will be propped.



- Formula milk feeds for infants will be provided by parents and ready to use. Staff will not make up formula feeds.
- A weekly menu of hot meals will provide the children with varied foods. This menu will be on display in advance. Recipes and food ingredients are available to parents.
- Parents are encouraged to offer menu suggestions or comments on the nutrition policy.
- All children will have suitable food available depending on their age, development and needs, using the recommended servings table as a guide.
- Breakfast will be available each morning. Parents are responsible to inform the pre-school if their child needs breakfast on arrival.
- Water will be available at all times.
- Diluted pure unsweetened fruit juice will be served with main meals.
- Children will have access to bread or fruit if they are hungry between scheduled meal and snack times.
- Children will be allowed to have dessert if they do not eat their main course.
- Parents will be advised if their child is not eating well.
- Parents of children on special diets will be asked to provide as much information as possible about suitable foods. In some cases, parents may be asked to provide food themselves.
- Carers will sit with the children when they eat and encourage good eating habits.
- Children will sit when eating or having a drink.
- Withholding food will not be used as a form of punishment.
- Parents are asked not to send sweets, crisps and other snack foods to the setting.
- Birthday party food should be discussed in advance with the staff.
- All food in the pre-school will be stored, prepared and served using good food safety practices. • Staff will receive training in relation to healthy eating and food safety.
- Children will be encouraged to play outside every day, weather permitting, to ensure they receive sunlight which helps their bodies to make vitamin D.
- This policy will be displayed in the reception area. It will be reviewed annually.
- We encourage healthy eating at home

### **Communicating and Sharing with Parents/Guardians:**

- **Parents/Guardians:** will be informed of this policy and its contents when they enroll their child in **Riverside Childcare.**
- Our food menus are circulated to **Parents/Guardians:** and displayed on our notice board.
- Children's food and drink intake throughout the day will be recorded in the daily diaries, this will be shared with each child's parent/guardian at the end of the day.
- **Parents/Guardians:** will be advised if their child is not eating well and a plan put in place in cooperation with the parent.
- Recipes and food ingredients will be available to parents. Please ask a member of staff if you require this information.
- **Parents/Guardians:** will be consulted around the dietary or religious requirements of their child and plans put in place to meet these requirements.
- **Parents/Guardians:** will be encouraged to offer menu suggestions.
- Parents/Guardians of children on special diets will be asked to provide as much information as possible



about suitable foods. In some cases, Parents/Guardians may be asked to provide food themselves.

In circumstances where **Parents/Guardians are providing food** the following will apply:

- Healthy eating suggestions will be given out to parents to support them to give their children healthy food options.
- Parents are asked **not to send sweets, crisps, biscuits and other snack foods** to the setting.
- **Parents/Guardians:** will be informed if the food they are sending in to the service for their child is not appropriate.
- Parents/Guardians will be given a list of snack suggestions to send in to **Riverside Childcare** for their child.

### **Food and Drink**

- Sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink are available to each child depending on their age and needs.
- Where required meals are adjusted for children to cater to their specific dietary requirements e.g. gluten free food
- We offer suitable sized portions in line with **safefood's** guidelines on Portion Size.
- There is fresh water available to children at all times.
- Parents/Guardians are informed if they need to send a snack in to the service with their child. Food brought in to the service must be suitable for the child to eat.
- If food brought in to the service by a child is not appropriate, children will be offered a suitable alternative by staff in **Riverside Childcare**.
- Food sent in from home is stored in a refrigerator.

### **Menu:**

- A menu for the children's meals will be displayed in the service where hot meals are provided and will include a wide variety of healthy foods. Any changes to the menu will be noted and substitutes will be of equal nutritional value.
- All meals will include appropriate servings of protein, starch, vegetables and iron and will be served with milk or water.

### **Older children:**

- Full fat milk or water will be served with morning and afternoon snacks. A low-fat or semi-skimmed milk option will be available at Parents/Guardians' request for children over 2 years of age, who eat a varied diet.
- Potable drinking water will be available at all times and will be accessible to the children.
- Fizzy drinks, fruit squash and other high sugar drinks will not be provided.
- Children will have access to crackers or fruit if they are hungry between scheduled meal and snack times.
- All children will have suitable food available depending on their age, development and needs, using the recommended portion sizes as a guide.



- Staff will sit with the children when they eat and encourage good eating habits.
- **Birthday party food** will be discussed in advance with the staff and Parents/Guardians. We ask Parents/Guardians not to send in cakes for birthdays.
- All food in the pre-school is stored, prepared and served using good food safety practices.
- Staff receive training in relation to healthy eating and food safety.
- Children are supervised at all times when they are eating.

#### **Meal requirements for children in Riverside Childcare:**

- **Children in day care for more than 5 hours per session (full day care)**

- At least two meals (one hot) and two snacks, for example – breakfast, snack, lunch and snack. If children are there for a long day, an evening meal can also need to be provided.

- **Children in day care for up to 5 hours maximum per session (part-time day care)**

- At least two meals and one snack, for example – breakfast, snack and lunch. It is not necessary to have a hot meal.

Children attending **afterschool** will have crackers, fruit and water available at all times. We will also offer one afternoon snack at 4pm to all children.

- **Children in day care for up to 3.5 hours per session (sessional pre-school service)**

- One meal and one snack – for example snack and lunch or breakfast and snack. Breakfast won't be provided if the children have had it at home. Our sessional preschool starts at 9:30 am so we will assume all children have had breakfast unless otherwise communicated to our staff at drop in. We will offer fruit to all children as well as their lunch brought from home.

#### **Food allergies and food intolerances (including coeliac disease):**

- Staff must be made aware if any of the children have any allergies or intolerances including, but not limited to:

- Peanuts and tree nuts
  - Wheat (gluten)
  - Sesame seeds
  - Fish and shellfish
  - Dairy products
  - Eggs
  - Soya
  - Wasp or bee stings
  - Natural latex rubber
  - Penicillin and other drugs



**Any of the 14 legislated food allergens used in the service food will be noted on the menu board to inform Parents/Guardians.**

**Food allergy prevention measures:**

Care will be taken to prevent accidental consumption of foods to which a child may be allergic or intolerant. **Riverside Childcare** will exclude food products if a child has a severe allergy.

- A child-specific written allergy/intolerance management plan will be available. A chart will be kept in each room with the name/photo of the child and the allergy type.
- When preparing food for the food allergic/intolerant child, great care will be taken to prevent any contamination with the food allergen they have to avoid.
- Parents/Guardians will be asked to provide up-to-date emergency (e.g. adrenaline auto injectors such as EpiPen/Anapen/Jext) and relieving medication that will be appropriately stored and always available.
- Staff will be trained in their use and what to do in the event of a severe allergic reaction.
- All care elements will apply when the allergic/intolerant child is taken on any excursion from the childcare setting.

**Please see our administration of medication policy for further information.**

**Person Responsible: Noelia Hernandez**

**This policy was adopted by Riverside Childcare on Date: 31/08/21**

**Signed by: Michael Dunster on behalf of Management (Owner)**

**Review Date: 31/08/2023**

**Relevant Links:**

[Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)

[Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#)

[Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Services](#)

FSAI [Bottle Feeding Safely](#)

FSAI [Allergens and Intolerances](#)

HSE [How to Prepare Your Bottle Feed](#)

HSE [Food for Young People](#)

HSE [3-Week Menu Plan for Pre-Schools](#)

Safefood [How to Prepare Your Baby's Bottle](#)

Safefood [Little Bites](#)

[Hints and Tips Pack for The Healthy Incentive for](#)

[Pre-Schools Project Irish Food Allergy Network](#)

[My Child](#)

[NCN Healthy Ireland Smart Start](#)

## Appendix 1: From 'Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Services':

### Snacks

- Snacks are important to help meet the energy needs of children.
- Remember that sugary snacks and sugary drinks spoil the appetite and take the place of healthier more nutritious foods.
- Furthermore, sugary snacks and sugary drinks are not good for a child's teeth. If they are given occasionally, offer with a meal - not between meals.
- In **TABLE 2, (page 16)** offer snacks from the JUICY, THIRSTY, SMOOTH, CRUNCHY and CHEWY snack choices to ensure a wide variety of foods in the child's diet.
- Dried fruits (currants and raisins) used in recipes are a good alternative sweetener to sugar for the older children. They are not recommended as between meal snacks because of the sugar content and the risk of dental caries.
- Whole nuts and popcorn are not recommended as snacks for children under 5 years because of the risk of choking.
- For younger children, take care to remove pips and seeds from fruit to help prevent choking.

Juicy Snacks	Thirsty Snacks	Smooth Snacks	Crunchy Snacks	Chewy Snacks
Orange	Milk	Banana	Raw vegetable slices, sticks or wedges – try them with yogurt dip	Bread – rolls, baps, pitta, baguettes
Pineapple chunks	Home-made soup	Yogurt – natural or fruit	Apples	Scones – plain, fruit or wholemeal
Plum	Check Drinks' <b>TABLE 4+5, (pages 19 + 20)</b>	Milk pudding	Toast	Cheese slices, cubes or strings
Pear		Home-made milkshake using yogurt, milk and fruit	Breakfast cereal (without sugar, honey or chocolate coating)	Cold meat slices
Tomato			Crackers (without salt on top)	
Seedless grapes				



### Offer suitable sized portions

The table below outlines the recommended numbers of daily serving sizes for different age groups

FOOD SHELF	1-3 YEARS	3-5 YEARS	SERVING SIZE
Meat, Fish and Alternatives Shelf <i>Iron – to help healthy blood flow</i>	2 small servings	2 servings	An average sized pork or lamb chop or homemade beef burger 2 slices (60g) of lean roast/boiled/grilled/oven-baked meat or chicken/turkey Medium sized fillet of fish or 2 fish fingers 2 eggs 9 dessertspoons of baked beans, peas or lentils
Milk, Cheese and Yogurt Shelf <i>Dairy foods help bones to grow</i>	3 servings	3 servings	1 glass of milk (½ pint) 1 carton of yogurt 30g of hard cheese 2 cheese slices 1 bowl of milk pudding (100g)
Fruit and Vegetable Shelf <i>Fruit and veg to help you glow</i>	2-4 servings	4 or more servings	1 medium sized fruit (50g) e.g. apple, orange or banana ½ glass of pure unsweetened fruit juice, diluted well with water 3 dessertspoons of stewed or tinned fruit in own juices or fresh fruit salad 3 dessertspoons chopped raw, salad or cooked vegetables Small bowl of home-made vegetable soup
Breads, Cereals, and Potato Shelf <i>Plenty of these to GO! GO! GO!</i>	4 servings	4-6 or more servings	1 slice of bread (white or wholegrain) 1 small bread roll 1 small bowl of breakfast cereal 1 small scone (plain, wholemeal or fruit) 1 medium potato (60g) – boiled or baked 3 dessertspoons of boiled rice or pasta (80g)

These serving sizes are only a guide. Children's appetites vary. If the child eats all the serving, offer some more food. For young children, start with smaller and fewer servings and increase up to the guidelines, according to the child's own growth and appetite.