

2.02 NUTRITION, ORAL HEALTH & ACTIVE PLAY POLICY

QUALITY AREA 2 | VERSION 1.23

PURPOSE

LEVNT EC Services acknowledge the importance of healthy eating, oral health and physical activity and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators and families at each service to eat nutritious food, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity and active play.
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met.
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus and implementing nutrition, oral health and active play activities.
- ensure the safe storage and preparation of food.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

LEVNT EC Services are committed to:

- creating policies and practices that promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about safe food preparation, nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met.
- ensuring the buildings, grounds and facilities enable healthy eating, oral health and active play.
- creating a culture in which all community members are respectfully supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be active.
- providing children with formal and informal opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health and health messages about physical activity.
- ensuring staff and educators have access to resources and support for their own healthy eating, oral health and physical activity.
- engaging families, the service community and expert organisations in the promotion and implementation of healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of LEVNT EC Services, including during offsite excursions and activities.

BACKGROUND

There are many benefits to promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour, oral hygiene practices and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.

As a health promoting service it is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health. Children, staff, educators and families can be supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be physically active through teaching and learning opportunities, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Nutrition

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide preschool children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age.

Oral health

Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being largely preventable. It is important to note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating.

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing. Tooth decay affects over half of all Australian children, making it five times more prevalent than asthma.

Active play

Active play develops a strong and healthy body, builds motor and co-ordination skills, creates a sense of wellbeing, and helps protect children from disease. Active play is about moving, being and doing.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition, oral health, and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn. Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, oral health and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*.

The Australian Government has guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings.

Progressive Mealtimes

In recognising children as active participants in their own learning, children should be encouraged to make meaningful decisions about elements of their own education and care. Incorporating progressive mealtimes into the educational program allows children to choose to eat when they are hungry, rather than according to a timetable. Children can gather in small groups to enjoy meals together, without interrupting the needs and play of others. This also encourages quieter, more social and meaningful interactions at mealtimes and allows for a smoother flow throughout the day. Children can make decisions based on their own needs, and can be supported to access food and water throughout the day by educators/staff, who actively participate in mealtimes.

A decision with respect to incorporating progressive mealtimes into the educational program must take into account the needs of all children at the service, particularly children with specific medical conditions such as diabetes. The National Regulations require services to ensure that children with medical conditions are able to participate fully in the educational program and are not discriminated against in any way.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms refer to the Definitions file of each LEVNT EC policy folder.

Active play: Play that involves large muscle-based activities that are essential for a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth and development incorporating:

- child-initiated active play, which is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games
- adult-guided active play which encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment
- physical activity, which includes sport, incidental exercise, and many forms of recreation.
- active travel, which includes walking, cycling, scootering, or any similar transport where physical activity is used to travel

'Discretionary' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre. These can also be referred to as 'sometimes' foods and drinks.

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

Oral health: The absence of active disease in the mouth. Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider, persons with management and control, nominated supervisor and/or persons in day-to-day charge are responsible for meeting requirements set out in the table below. Actions which are legislated requirements of the ECEC sector are indicated with **LR**.

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play	LR	✓	✓		
Embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program, throughout the year	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that age-appropriate adult-guided and child-initiated active play is planned daily across all age groups		✓	✓		✓
Discussing the benefits of certain foods for our bodies with children		✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing a variety of cooking and food experiences that support children to develop food literacy and positive habits relating to food		✓	✓		✓
Role-modelling positive eating, drinking and physical activity behaviours, promoting a healthy relationship with food and interacting with children at meal times		✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing a positive eating environment and sitting and interacting with children at mealtimes		✓	✓		✓
Providing adequate supervision for all children at all times, including at mealtimes	LR	LR	✓		✓
Encouraging children to be independent at snack/mealtimes e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving and using utensils in a culturally-sensitive way		✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development	LR	✓	✓		
Providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health and active play, for young children	LR	✓	✓		
Providing and promoting healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables in line with the service's <i>Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play policy</i> , where applicable, and discouraging sometimes/discretionary food options	LR	✓		✓	
Ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (<i>Regulation 77</i>) (refer to <i>Hygiene Policy and Food Safety Policy</i>)	LR	✓	✓		✓

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (<i>refer to Anaphylaxis Policy, Asthma Policy, Diabetes Policy and Food Safety Policy</i>)	LR	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that all ECT, educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children	LR	LR			
Ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis	LR	LR			
Providing details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on their child's enrolment form, and discussing these with the nominated supervisor prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time (<i>refer to Anaphylaxis Policy, Asthma Policy and Diabetes Policy</i>)				✓	
Communicating regularly with ECT, educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences				✓	
Ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (<i>Regulation 78(1)(a)</i>) (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)	LR	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that best practices are followed in relation to bottle feeding and sipper cups as outlined in the NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines	✓	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring oral hygiene practices are undertaken at the service where appropriate	✓	✓	✓		✓
Providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program, including age-appropriate tooth brushing		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (<i>Regulation 78(1)(b)</i>)	LR	✓			
Ensuring educators and staff are supported to access a range of resources and professional development to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives for children	✓	✓			
Providing food and drinks at regular intervals, and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/mealtimes without feeling rushed		✓	✓		✓
Providing families with information and strategies to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play and how to access relevant services (including local dental clinics)	✓	✓	✓		
Developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating, oral health and active play	✓	✓	✓		
Ensuring that food and drinks are not used as an incentive or reward	✓	✓	✓		✓
Considering this policy when organising excursions, service events and any sponsorship or marketing opportunities	✓	✓	✓		
Developing and reviewing guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents/guardians and families to focus on healthy alternatives	LR	✓			

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring the layout of the grounds and buildings is inclusive of the diversity and abilities of all children and encourages physical activity and movement	LR	✓			
Ensuring recommendations about physical activity and screen time from the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years) are met	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring children are not sedentary or inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping		✓	✓		✓
Supporting children to develop collaboration skills during play		✓	✓		✓
Ensuring that children are taught how to use equipment safely	LR	✓	✓		✓
Planning and providing active play and movement experiences that are age-appropriate, inclusive of diversity and abilities and support children to develop fundamental movement skills		✓	✓		✓
Considering opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions		✓	✓		✓
Dressing child/ren so they can engage safely in active play		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring service facilities and equipment enable active travel and road safety for children, staff, educators and families	LR	✓			
Supporting, promoting and encouraging active travel to and from the service (<i>Regulations 100 -102</i>)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to both children and parents/guardians at the service	LR	✓	✓		
Using and promoting local parks, bike paths and recreation facilities, where appropriate, to encourage physical activity	✓	✓	✓		
Ensuring there is a suitable space for breastfeeding and storage of breast milk is available (where applicable)	LR	✓			
Ensuring space and facilities are available to allow staff and educators to store and prepare healthy food safely (as appropriate to the service delivery type)	LR	✓			
Ensuring healthy eating, oral health and active play information and policy requirements are included in the educator and staff induction	LR	✓			
Ensuring educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour during work hours	LR	✓			
Supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service	LR	✓			
Where food is provided by the service:					
Ensuring the provision of nutritionally-balanced and culturally-sensitive meals, in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Infant Feeding Guidelines, as required	LR	✓			
Ensuring that staff who are responsible for menu planning participate in regular nutrition and safe food handling training, and are kept up to date with current research, knowledge and best practice	LR	✓			
Ensuring that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, varied, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(1))	LR	✓			
Ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's FoodChecker tool and meets the criteria determined	LR	✓			

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1))	LR	✓			
Displaying menus, sharing recipes and encouraging feedback about the food provided at the service.	LR	✓			

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

Birthdays and Celebrations

LEVNT EC Services value the importance of celebrating children’s birthdays as it helps to establish a strong sense of identity within a child. It also helps establish a sense of belonging to their EC environment.

Staff will create service specific ways of celebrating birthdays (eg. reusable birthday hat, special birthday chair, candle to be used at a mealtime etc) within a group/room and ask that parents save birthday cakes and party/goodie bags for family celebrations outside the service.

In the event of a special day, activity or celebration at the service that includes children and involves the provision of a ‘sometimes food’, staff will:

- Inform parents of the planned provision of a ‘sometimes food’ including details such as when the event will take place, the type of food to be provided, who will provide the food (if an outside company), how children with special dietary requirements will be catered for etc.
- Invite parents with questions/concerns to contact the Lead Educator and/or Service Leader and allow parents with ongoing concerns to provide their own alternative food option
- Ensure that all dietary needs are provided for by the service (ie. It is not acceptable to ask families of children with special dietary needs to provide their own ‘treat’)

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues arising from this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of a policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk

AUTHORISATION & REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, TAS and ACT Ltd as Approved Provider for this service on 20 July 2023.

REVIEW DATE August 2025 or earlier as required.

REFERENCES

RELATED RESOURCES

- National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Dietary Guidelines and Infant Feeding Guidelines
- Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood resources
- National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years
- Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Healthy Eating Advisory Service – refer to Sources), run by Nutrition Australia.

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* including Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Food Act 1984* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard* including Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

SOURCES

- *Australian Dietary Guidelines 2019*, National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Dental Health Services Victoria: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Department of Health (2013) *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*: <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-staffcarers>
- *The Achievement Program* is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers* (2012): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/npra-0-5yrs-brochure>
- Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#npa1864>

- National Health and Medical Research Council ,*Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th edition, 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: www.education.vic.gov.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reaction
- Asthma
- Curriculum Development
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases
- Dealing with Medical Conditions
- Diabetes
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- Food Safety
- Hygiene
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Inclusion and Equity
- Road Safety and Safe Transport
- Sun Protection