09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes (older children)

Following guidance around safer eating practices children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff **and where possible should be sat 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 named person 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, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
- Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
- Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually move to semi-skimmed milk as a main drink, if they are eating a varied and balanced diet.
- 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 sat facing them while they are eating.
- There is a Paediatric First Aider present at children's meal and snack times.
- Children help staff set tables.
- Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.

- Staff who are always eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- 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.
- To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
- Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and adults.
- There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends.
- After lunch children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
- Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands before and after lunch. The children clean their teeth no sooner than 1 hour after eating an recommended, where hygiene procedures pose no risk (see procedure 04.6 Oral health).
- Information for parents/carers is displayed on the parent/carers notice board, including:
    - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf