
MODEL PRESCHOOL NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

To create the healthiest possible environment for the children in our care, we have instituted the following policies:

NUTRITION

Breakfast and Lunch: We provide all children with breakfast between 8:30 and 9:00 am, lunch between 12:00 and 12:30 pm, and an afternoon snack at 3:30 pm. Children have 30 minutes to eat breakfast and lunch, and 20 minutes to eat snack. All meals and snacks meet the current U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements and the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) recommendations for CACFP. The center uses a cycle menu of 4 weeks that changes with the seasons, contains minimal repetition and provides foods from different cultures. We serve a variety of foods to broaden children's food experiences. Monthly menus are posted on our website and on the message board of each classroom.

Menus are planned by our chef and reviewed by our nutrition consultant, both of whom have received training on the CACFP requirements. Meals and snacks emphasize nutrient-rich foods (e.g., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or non-fat dairy and lean meats). All foods are trans-fat free, and the meals and snacks have no more than 10% of their calories from saturated fats. All foods contain less than 25% added sugar by weight and are low in sodium (<425mg per lunch; <327 per breakfast). Breakfast contains ½ cup of either fruit or vegetable, ½ cup of milk, 1 oz of meat/meat alternate (3 days/week), 1 oz of whole grains (2 oz when meat/meat alternate is not served). Lunch contains a serving each of fruit (1/2 cup), meat or meat alternate (1oz), whole grain (1oz) and low fat milk (1/2 cup), as well as two servings of vegetable (totaling ½ cup). We use healthy food preparation techniques for our menus (e.g., we steam vegetables, bake chicken, etc.). Foods that do not meet the IOM CACFP

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standards, such as soda, sweetened tea, fruit drinks, full-fat and flavored milk, candy, cookies, sugary cereals and French fries are not allowed to be served or consumed at our center.

Teachers are trained in all aspects of the CACFP including positive mealtime behavior. Food is never used as a punishment or reward in our center. Staff use mealtime as an opportunity to teach nutrition and food concepts. Adults eat with the children to encourage social interaction and conversation, and ask questions and talk about nutrition concepts related to the foods being served. Teachers remind children to take small portions, and encourage, without forcing, each child to eat or taste their food. Teachers help children gauge level of fullness when requests for second helpings are made. Second helpings are not put on children's plate unless they ask for more or serve themselves. When second helpings are requested, teachers encourage fruits and vegetables before other meal components. Our nutrition program provides and supports a social environment at mealtime where children wash their hands, eat family style, and learn how to pour beverages, serve themselves, make independent food choices, and practice good table manners.

Teachers and staff are required to consume the same food offered to children during meals. No other foods and beverages may be consumed in front of children. Exceptions are made for teachers and staff who have special religious, dietary, or medical restrictions.

Snacks: Snacks include either whole fruits or vegetables at least once each day, when >1 snack is served during the day. Per IOM recommendations, vegetables (1/4 cup) and fruit (1/2 cup) are each served at least twice per week, as are milk (1/2 cup), whole grains (1 oz) and lean meat/meat alternate (1oz). One-hundred percent juice is served in place of fresh fruit or vegetables during no more than one snack time each week, and no more than 4 oz are permitted in one day. Only low fat 1% or non-fat/skim milk is served. No flavored milk or full-fat milk is permitted. Snacks are low in sugar, saturated fat and sodium (<229mg) and are trans-fat free, as recommended by the IOM. Staff offer water to children often during the day. Safe, fresh drinking water is clearly visible and available to children at all times indoors and outdoors, including during meals and snacks.

Food from Home: If parents choose to pack meals or snacks to replace those provided by the center, meals and/or snack(s) must meet CACFP requirements. No candy, soda, sweetened beverages, cookies

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or other desserts are allowed to be brought into the center. Parents are reminded to pack child-size portions. If children bring prohibited foods to school, these foods are returned home with a reminder. The child is given an alternative food by center staff. If families consistently send food that does not meet nutritional requirements, the center refers the family to a local dietician. All food that is brought in from home must be clearly labeled by the family with the child's name and date and type of food and is stored at an appropriate temperature until eaten. If refrigerator space is not available, families are asked to put an ice pack in their child's lunch bag.

Celebrations & Special Events: We take great pleasure in celebrating children's milestones. We have chosen to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions with activities that focus on the child, not food. This policy is consistent with the healthy environment we are promoting and the nutrition curriculum we are teaching to the children. Teachers and parents may choose a special activity to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions. A list of nonfood activities for these events is available in the center's Parent Handbook.

Fundraising: Fundraising activities for the center do not include the sale of any foods or beverages. Fundraising activities that promote physical activity are encouraged. We do not rely on sales from vending machines, and no vending machines are located within the center.

DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

We provide all children with numerous opportunities for physical activity throughout the day; children are not sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time, except during sleep. Preschoolers have at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity and at least 60 minutes (up to several hours) of unstructured physical activity daily. All children are provided outdoor time at least twice daily, weather and air quality permitting. Children can go outside when the temperatures are above 15 degrees Fahrenheit (including wind chill factor) and below 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Outdoor time is limited to 20 to 30 minutes when temperatures are between 16 to 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

In the case of severe weather similar activities are provided inside. Our center provides equipment and materials for active play and movement that support the development of gross motor skills and are appropriate for all children. During outdoor play, children practice gross motor skills with a variety of

activities, such as running, skipping, kicking and throwing balls. Children with disabilities have opportunities to participate in physical activity with their peers.

Our facilities are regularly inspected to ensure the safety of all children. Teachers make sure the outdoor environment is safe by discarding broken materials, cleaning contaminated areas, sweeping/raking areas regularly, and picking up large branches. Teachers also position themselves at different points around the playground to be able to watch all children. Teachers are trained in physical activity promotion including activities that promote gross and large motor skills and involve running and other physical activity. Teachers are required to participate in physical activity with their students to increase child participation and model healthy levels of activity.

Parents are instructed to dress their children for safe outdoor playtime. It is important that children have appropriate clothing at the center according to the season. Children have access to drinking water at all times. In the summer children must come to school wearing sunscreen for morning outdoor play. Teachers will reapply prior to afternoon outdoor activities. Parents must provide permission by completing a Topical Medication form.

Extra physical activity may be used as a reward; it is never used or withheld as a punishment.

Screen Time: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under two years old do not engage in any screen time at all and older children watch no more than 1-2 hours per day. Because we know that children watch television and play on the computer at home, we do not have any screen time in our centers.

EDUCATION

We have a developmentally appropriate health education curriculum for children in the center that includes lessons and activities on nutrition and physical activity. Nutrition education is also incorporated into other content areas, such as language and literacy development, mathematics, science and music. Our staff members incorporate nutrition themes into planned learning experiences, when appropriate, to reinforce and support health messages. Nutrition concepts are integrated into daily routines whenever possible, such as mealtimes and transitions.

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Teachers are required to participate in annual training on nutrition and physical activity for children. Throughout our center, healthful food and physical activities are promoted in posters, books, games and toys (e.g., kitchen equipment). All books, posters, and other educational materials are free of illustrations of unhealthful foods.

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

Our center actively promotes positive verbal and nonverbal messages about healthy eating and physical activity. All staff members help to reinforce these positive messages. Our center encourages family involvement to support and promote children's healthy eating and physical activity habits. We welcome family input; for example, families are encouraged to suggest items they would like to see on the menu. Parents are asked to evaluate health program components (curriculum, health policies, etc) via survey. We communicate in ways that respect families' cultures and customs. Nutrition education and physical activity information is provided for parents through workshops at least twice per year, and through monthly newsletters. We measure child height and weight regularly. Families will be referred to appropriate agencies should their child have health or nutrition needs that cannot be met at the center. We encourage parents to communicate any concerns about their child's eating or physical activity habits. We also encourage parents to contact us with any questions or suggestions about our nutrition and physical activity practices.

EVALUATION

Our center maintains a health advisory team for the planning, operation and evaluation of nutrition and physical activity programs and policies. Membership includes parents, governing board members, our health consultant and teachers. We develop work plans to facilitate policy implementation. We regularly review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas in need of improvement. We observe program practices at least every six months to ensure they are consistent with our policies. Health program improvements are made based on these findings.

Parents with comments, questions or concerns regarding this policy are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the Director.