

Supporting healthy eating in early years

Eating well is an important part of keeping healthy. Children who eat a healthy balanced diet tend to be ill less often, have more energy and a better attention span; they also have better dental health.

As a nursery practitioner, you are in an ideal position to have a positive influence on children in the early years. You can provide support to families in developing healthy attitudes and choices towards food and physical exercise too.

Supporting healthy eating in your nursery:

- A comprehensive age and stage appropriate daily menu (and snack menu)
- A healthy eating display/information
- Share your weaning policy with families
- Growing activities indoors and out e.g. vegetable garden
- Celebrate food from around the world – home corner resources, interest tables, utensils, play food, multi-cultural costumes, books and posters, positive images
- Take children to local shops, farms and restaurants within your local community – buy the foods you need, gather menus, take photographs, collect utensils and make a home-made photo book for evidence
- Provide feedback to parents on daily food intake
- A robust special diet procedure and regularly reviewed, evaluated and communicated to parents
- Library visits for books on food for all age groups
- Ensure mealtimes support all ages and stages of development e.g. weaning menu
- Positive discussions about food being eaten and encouragement to try new foods
- Utensils that encourage and enable children to self-serve
- Regular cooking activities which reflect the child's interests.



Healthy lifestyle policy

The best way to make sure that recommendations and advice about healthy eating and physical play are agreed upon and followed by parents and carers as well is to write a healthy lifestyle policy.

Supporting healthy attitudes towards health and well-being:

- Work with parents to help them understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle on their children's fitness, health and well-being
- Be a good role model to children and families by keeping fit and healthy yourself
- Educate and advise parents/carers how to engage in regular physical activity for themselves and their children
- Promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in the daily curriculum and routine, through a wide range of activities, resources and experiences.

