

**Healthy Food Policy**

**Policy Statement**

The centre is responsible for providing breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late snack for the children. The lunch and afternoon tea menu is displayed in the foyer near the kitchen area each week.

* Meals will be prepared with an emphasis on fresh and unprocessed foods.
* Sugar, salt, fat, preservatives and food colourings will be kept to a minimum.
* Parents are requested not to bring any food into the centre.
* Children's eating habits will be monitored with special attention given to babies under 18 months. Introduction of new foods will be carried out with care after consultation with parents.
* For children's birthdays the centre will provide cakes made on the premises.
* Cows and soy milk will be provided for children during the course of the day. The family must supply formula. Drinks other than breast milk, formula and cooled boiled water are not recommended in infants under 12 months of age.
* Water is encouraged throughout the day.

As outlined in the Sun Smart Policy, parents are requested to supply a refillable drink bottle, clearly named for each individual child. This will help prevent cross infection and illnesses amongst the children. A basket will be supplied in each of the children’s rooms for daily storage of drink bottles, and we ask that the drink bottle be taken home each day, washed out and packed back into your child’s bag the next time they attend Meruka. This basket will be cleaned at the end of each day.

Meruka’s healthy eating policy reflects the following concepts to:

* Support breastfeeding
* Support appropriate formula/bottle feeding strategies
* Promote appropriate food choices and physical activity
* Promote each child’s normal growth and development
* Regularly review children’s physical growth.

**This policy has been developed in order to guide parents and staff in their endeavours to provide and meet the nutritional needs of all children attending the service as well as promoting healthy eating and active play every day.**

* The service refers to the Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013 (eatforhealth.gov.au)
* The Service refers to the Better Health Channel’s position statement on “Childcare and healthy eating” and “Children’s Diet – fruit and vegetables”

**Strategies and practices – Healthy Eating and Active Play**

**1. Drinking water is available indoors and outdoors at all times and is accessible to children**

* Water will be provided with each meal and snack.
* As outlined the Sun Smart Policy, parents are requested to supply a refillable drink bottle, clearly named for each individual child. This will help prevent cross infection and illnesses amongst the children. A basket will be supplied in each of the children’s rooms for daily storage, and we ask that the drink bottle be taken home each day, washed out and packed back into your child’s bag the next time they attend Meruka.

**2. Healthy food provided daily**

* Fresh fruit and vegetables are provided every day in the menu planning.
* Meals will be prepared with an emphasis on fresh and unprocessed foods.
* Wholegrain cereals and breads will be incorporated into some meals.
* Use of Meruka’s own vegetable garden when seasonal fresh produce is available.

**3. Positive meal environments are planned to be relaxed, social and enjoyable learning experiences by**

* Children participating in serving and self-feeding.
* Encouraging children to try new foods regularly, including different colors, textures, flavours and aromas.
* Providing the opportunity for staff/careers to sit with children when they are eating and drinking for role modeling, safety, learning and socialisation.

**4. Only water and plain milk is offered and Meruka caters for this**

* Cows and soy milk will be provided for all children during the course of the day. The family must supply formula. Reduced fat milk may be offered to children 2 years and older.
* Water is encouraged throughout the day.

**5. Food is not used as a reward, incentive or for comfort**

* Positive behaviour will be reinforced by approval and encouragement.
* Emphasis is on encouraging and reinforcing appropriate behaviour in children.
* The service is committed to ensuring that children experience consistent and positive approaches to behaviour guidance.

**6. Daily structure and free active play are a significant component of the program**

* Structured play experiences such as dance, music and movement are planned every day.
* Free and creative active play is part of the program and is scheduled on a daily basis.
* Healthy Aussie kids program runs one day a week for eight weeks throughout each school term (Toddler and Kinder Room only).
* All active play experiences are inclusive of all children attending Meruka.

**7. Screen time (television/DVD/computers/electronic games) are not used at the service.**

**8. Age appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and car safety and playing safely is provided as part of the program to children and their parent/carers in the service**

* Current information is given to families and is also visible around the service in regards to traffic safety in accordance with Vic Roads.
* Pedestrian and care safety is promoted throughout the program and in daily practices.

**9. Families are included and informed of the policies**

* Families are provided with regular information, ideas and strategies to promote healthy eating and active play.

**Referenced National Quality Standards**

* **Quality Area 2** **– Children’s Health and Safety**
  + **2.1** Each Child’s health is promoted.
  + **2.2** Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children.
* **Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children**
  + **5.1** Respectful & equitable relationships are developed & maintained with each child.
  + **5.2** Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.
* **Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families & Communities**
  + **6.2** Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.