



09 Early years practice procedures

09.07 Prime Times – Baby and Toddler Mealtimes

Feeding and mealtimes are key times in the day for being close and to promote security, as well as for exploration and learning. We understand the importance of a healthy balanced diet for young children.

Bottle fed babies

- Babies hands are washed prior to being given their bottle.
- Babies are fed by their key person or back-up key person if they are not in.
- Bottles are warmed and ready in time; babies should not be left hungry and crying while bottles are being prepared.
- The key person sits in a comfortable chair, or on cushions to feed the baby; the key person needs to be relaxed and calm.
- Babies should be held close so that eye contact can be made. Key persons are responsive to their communication gestures during feeding, talking quietly to them, stroking or holding their hands.
- Babies are winded after feeding and the baby is settled to sleep or play.
- Other key children may want to be close to their carer when a baby is being fed. This may allay any anxiety or feelings of jealousy, especially for toddlers.
- Planning for feeding times should be done to try to avoid overlap so that one-to-one attention can be given. If this cannot be avoided the feeding times should be arranged so that the key person can comfortably be with both babies at the same time. Unless in extreme circumstances, feeding should not be regarded as a shared task; unfamiliar carers should not take over feeding times just to 'get it done'.
- Over 1s may be propped up with a pillow at sleep time to support holding their own bottle but preferably held in arms.

Toddler mealtimes

- For the most part, older babies and toddlers who are feeding themselves have their meals in their space, with their key group and key person.
- Whilst eating, children are always within sight and hearing of a member of staff.



- Staff will ensure that food is prepared in a way to prevent choking, according to the current guidance on food safety for young children: [Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/food-safety-help/food-safety-help-for-early-years-providers).
- Staff will ensure that babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating.
- There is a Paediatric First Aider present at meal and snack times.
- Staff who are eating with the children must role-model hygiene, healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- Staff arrange the table before toddlers sit down; there should be no waiting time.
- Food is served from children's home provided lunch boxes.
- Babies' and toddlers' hands are wiped/washed clean before their meal.
- Staff ask the children what they want; they do not put food on plates if the toddler indicates that they do not want it. Toddlers can get very upset if their detested food is put in front of them; they do not understand 'try a little bit' in the way an older child does.
- Babies and toddlers are not discouraged from eating with their fingers; this exploration of their food with their hands is the beginning of self-feeding. When they have finished, they may wish to 'play' further with any remaining food. It is fine for them to get a bit messy; they, and their table can be cleaned afterwards.
- Babies and toddlers are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction of babies and toddlers with their group and the adults who care for them. It is a time of sensory learning and learning skills, as well as for the fundamental satisfaction of being fed.
- To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, staff will record details of where and how the child choked and ensure parents and/or carers are made aware.
- Pre-School Management will periodically review records to identify if there are trends or common features of incidents that could be addressed to reduce the risk of choking. Appropriate action will be taken to address any identified concerns.