

09 Early years practice procedures

09.7 Prime times –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. Cottontails Preschool understands the importance of a healthy nutritious and balanced diet for young children. At each meal/snack time, a named person is responsible for checking that the food provided meets all requirements for each child.

Toddler mealtimes

- For the most part, toddlers who are feeding themselves have their meals in their space.
- Whilst eating, there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate. with the criteria set out in Annex A of the EYFS.
- A member of staff should always be in sight and hearing of children when eating and sat facing them wherever possible so they can ensure that children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.
- Choking can be silent and so staff should be fully engaged in the sharing of a snack or meal with children and alert to the risk of choking.
- Babies and young children should be seated safely in an appropriately sized low chair while eating.
- 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.
- Toddlers hand washing is supervised making sure they are clean before their meal.
- 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. No child should be pressured to eat if they choose not to.
- 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 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.
- Information for parents is displayed on the parent's notice board, including:

- Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf
- Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens