

Healthy eating policy

Nutrition is a significant factor in the growth, development and overall functioning of a child. Good nutrition provides the energy and nutrients essential to sustain life and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development. The development of healthy eating practices and physical activity can prevent disease and support a lifetime of good health.

Good nutrition is critical to optimizing each child's potential for success. Meeting nutritional requirements throughout childhood is essential to full intellectual development. Research documents tell us that nutrition impacts on children's behaviour, performance and overall quality of development. Children require sufficient energy and essential nutrients each day to concentrate on accomplishing tasks. Even mild and under nutrition and short term hunger are barriers to learning. Meals and snacks served should meet children's nutritional needs, provide models of healthy eating patterns, and help children establish good eating patterns at an early age.

Testlands aim to encourage and develop healthy eating practices which will become embedded for life.

Testlands' healthy eating objectives

- To encourage children with positive healthy eating experiences in order to promote their well being.
- To respect the different dietary, cultural, religious and health needs of all children. ● To encourage children to develop positive attitudes towards food through all the learning opportunities that are provided in the club.
- To promote an understanding of a balanced diet in which some foods play a greater role than others.
- To develop children's understanding of the importance of the social context in which eating takes place.
- To raise awareness with children, parents and carers in developing a positive approach to food, nutrition and oral education.
- To encourage responsibility and accountability of all parents and carers in offering healthy choices to children.

The importance of nutrition for children

A nutritionally balanced diet is important in childhood to ensure optimum development at a time of rapid growth. A balanced diet in childhood is not only important for growth but for learning and promoting positive habits towards healthy eating. An inadequate or unbalanced nutritional intake may not only affect growth and development in childhood but may also impact on health problems, such as heart disease and obesity later in life. It is the types and

varieties of food eaten at this time that ensure nutrient requirements are met and that the diet is nutritionally balanced. Children's diet must include an appropriate intake of foods from the four main food groups:

- Bread, other cereals and potatoes
- Fruit and vegetables
- Milk and dairy foods
- Meat, fish and alternatives

Being healthy

Eat breakfast every day

Eat fruit and vegetables daily

Choose snacks that will provide nutrients to compliment meals

Avoid snacks and drinks with a high sugar content between meals

Drink plenty of fluids to avoid becoming dehydrated

Be physically active every day

Brush teeth twice a day and visit your dentist regularly

Encourage snacks and lunches to be nutritious, avoiding large quantities of sugar, salt, saturated fats, additives, preservatives and colourings.

We have fresh drinking water and suitable cups readily available for children and colleagues

We support the children in recognising that they need to drink water when they are thirsty, hot, tired, or feeling unwell.

Snack times

Snacks are provided by us and will include fruit and vegetables, milk and cheese, oatcakes, rice cakes and breadsticks. This is inline with the Department of Health's guidelines on healthy eating. Snacks are varied each day with a variety of tastes and textures. Snack portions are restricted so that the children still retain an appetite for lunch. Fresh drinking water is always available.

Lunch boxes

Parents are strongly encouraged to provide healthy, balanced lunches for their children and to include only water as a drink. We also ask parents not to pack more food than their child can eat.

We understand that ensuring a child has eaten enough and is happy can be a source of concern. Therefore, we encourage parents to discuss any concerns they have about what their child is eating at lunch time and portion sizes with their play partner.

A diet where high levels of added sugars and salt are regularly consumed is strongly linked to the development of long-term chronic diseases such as type II diabetes and heart disease. Therefore, to ensure children are having the right balance of food and drink across the day, it is recommended that high sugar, fat and salt items are not included in packed lunches.

The consumption of any type of juice drink is strongly linked with the development of tooth decay. We therefore ask parents only to provide water in packed lunches in keeping with what the children are used to at snack time. We recommend that parents look at the food labels on any packaged food that is included in lunch boxes and consider how these foods fit into the balance of foods a child is eating over a day. The NHS guidance on salt and sugar content is:

Salt	1 to 3 years – 2 g salt a day (0.8 g sodium) 4 to 6 years – 3 g salt a day (1.2 g sodium)
Sugar	children aged 4 to 6 years old should have no more than 19 g of added sugars in a day (5 sugar cubes)

Please follow the links to the NHS website for more information on sugar and salt in our diets:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/sugars.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx>

If you would like further information on what foods are recommended as part of a balanced diet, please ask our senior leader.

Because of the risk of allergies, children are not permitted to swap food. An ice pack should be provided during summer months to keep food cool.

Food and eating environment

Testlands will provide a clean, sociable environment for the children to eat their snack and lunch. Both snack time and lunch time are group activities where the children all sit down together. The children are also encouraged to help prepare their food using safety knives.

No child will ever be forced to eat or drink something against their will, and the withholding or granting of food and drink will never be used as either a punishment or reward.

Last reviewed: August 2024

Date of next review: August 2025

Signed by: B. Stanley