09 Early years practice procedures

**09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes**

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

**Snack times**

* A ‘snack’ is prepared mid-morning and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager eg picnic on a blanket
* Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Children are only offered full-fat milk until they are at least two years old because they may not get the calories they need from semi-skimmed milk. After the age of two, children can gradually move to semi-skimmed as a main drink as long as they are eating a varied and balanced diet
* Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds, but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
* Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
* Healthy options are given
* Children arrive as they want refreshment and leave when they have had enough.
* Staff join in conversation and encourage older children’s independence by allowing them to pour drinks, cut fruit etc.

**Mealtimes**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes.
* Children bring their own packed lunch.
* Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
* Children are encouraged to eat their sandwiches first before moving in to their crisps, yogurt etc
* Staff have their lunch with children and this give a good opportunity for valuable conversations
* Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults’ tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are only encouraged to try new foods slowly.
* In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
* Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
* After lunch children are encouraged to put their rubbish in the bin and help clear away
* Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch in their key groups. Cleaning teeth no sooner than 1 hour after lunch is recommended where hygiene procedures pose no risk (see procedure 04.6 Oral health)/ It is not always recommended for groups in shared premises.
* 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>