

First national guidelines for early years nutrition launched ^[1]

Author: Morton, Katy

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EXCERPTS:

The first ever nutritional guidelines to support early years settings in providing healthy meals for children under five have been launched today by the School Food Trust.

The new guidance, *The Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings*, is the first to offer a nationally recognised source of information to childcare providers about what food and drink they should serve to young children to help instil healthy eating habits and tackle childhood obesity.

They have been developed in response to the review of the EYFS, in which Dame Clare Tickell highlighted the importance of the findings of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in the Early Years, and recommended that the Government provide further advice and good practice for practitioners.

The National Day Nurseries Association, the National Childminding Association and the Pre-School Learning Alliance are among those supporting the guidelines.

To help settings plan healthy meals and snacks for children, the guidance includes information about what types of food and drink should be served to children and the correct portion size for their age. How to read food labels, food safety and hygiene practices are also covered, along with advice about what different religious and cultural groups can eat and how to tackle fussy eating.

The guidance also provides early years settings with recipes and sample menus for Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter, with options for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for five days of the week (see example menu).

As part of the guidelines, a voluntary code of practice has also been launched by the School Food Trust, which encourages settings to consider whether they provide children with a positive and welcoming eating environment and to consult with children and their families about the food they offer.

Children's minister Sarah Teather said, 'Healthy eating is at the heart of helping every child get the best start in life. Nurseries play a vital role in getting children from all backgrounds to develop good eating habits, but many lack the expert knowledge of what is the best food to serve.

'Parents rightly want their children to be eating healthy, nutritional food. Thanks to these voluntary guidelines drawn up by the School Food Trust, we will help nurseries and other childcare providers do just that.'

Purnima Tanuku, chief executive of the National Day Nurseries Association, said, 'NDNA welcomes and is fully supportive of these new guidelines which will help children to get a healthy start in their early years and hopefully instil a healthy eating attitude which will last a lifetime.

'We will be working with our member nurseries to help them to understand and implement the guidelines well in their settings.'

Training early years providers on how to use the guidelines is taking place in Hertfordshire, Stoke, Southwark, Gloucestershire and Gateshead and will be rolled out to other local authorities.

Nutritionist Patricia Mucavele, who helped to draw up the guidelines, said, 'There's lots of support being put into place to help any early years provider start to use these guidelines – we are piloting training with five local authorities already and will be coming to more areas in the coming year.

'This is just the beginning, and we hope that as many providers as possible will use these guidelines to help children get a healthy start in life.'

- reprinted from Nursery World

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