



**PLANT
FRUIT & VEG
IN YOUR
LUNCHBOX**

Criterion 2

- a) Exclusive breastfeeding is encouraged with positive support, for babies up to 6 months. Continued breastfeeding is also encouraged and supported beyond 6 months.
- b) A variety of age-appropriate fruit and vegetables are served daily. For each occasion that food is served, offer fruit and/or vegetables. Fruit and vegetables are requested in lunchboxes brought from home.
- c) Meal environments are planned to be positive, relaxed and social experiences.

To meet this criterion include the following in your service's practice and policy:

Criterion 2a Breastfeeding

- The service and all staff have a welcoming attitude towards breastfeeding, and display and provide information that shows this support.
- The service has an appropriate comfortable space for mothers to express milk or breastfeed.
- The service uses and promotes relevant safe-handling practices for breast milk labelling, storage and use.
- For Child and Family Centres:* Infant formula is not supplied or promoted, and staff know where to refer families for help with breastfeeding (i.e. Child Health and Parenting Service or the Australian Breastfeeding Association).

Criterion 2b Fruit and Vegetables

- A variety of age-appropriate fruit and vegetables are served each day. Fruits and/or vegetables are offered at each meal and snack either separately (e.g. as a platter) or as part of the meal itself.
- Families are asked to send a variety of fruit and vegetables in the lunch box each day.

Criterion 2c Meal Environments

- Encourage children to try new and different fruit and vegetables, including a range of colours, textures, flavours and aromas.
- Educators are encouraged to sit and enjoy food with the children to support a positive and social meal environment.
- Allow plenty of time for children to eat as much food as they choose without feeling rushed.
- Allow children to serve and feed themselves where age appropriate.



Quick tip: It is OK to copy and paste the above dot points into your policy if it is happening in practice.

Add your 'Plant Fruit and Veg in your Lunchbox' progress sticker to your Member Certificate when all relevant parts of this criterion are happening in practice and written into policy.

Why is this criterion important?

- Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding in Early Childhood Services helps both mother and baby's health; boosting babies' immune systems, reducing the babies' risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, Type 2 Diabetes and some cancers later in life and reducing the risk of mothers developing breast or ovarian cancer. ¹

- Providing and requesting a variety of fruit and veg at Early Childhood Services helps babies and children to develop and grow. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables helps to keep children happy and strong. ^{1,3,4,6}
- Provision of optimal nutrition during early childhood can help to promote health and wellbeing including mental health and wellbeing in childhood and adult life. ⁸
- Creating a relaxed, social and positive meal environment can help children and babies to eat well, learn to enjoy a wide variety of foods and develop confidence in their bodies. ⁴

Reasons for action:

Helping children to eat well from the start will get them into good eating habits for life.

- **Breastfeeding**
Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed a baby. Breast milk has everything needed to help babies to grow. In Tasmania only 75% of babies are being breastfed when discharged from hospital. By four months the rate has fallen to 56% of babies being breastfed. ⁵ Australia's target is 90% of babies breastfed from birth and 80% at six months.
- **Fruit and Vegetable intake**
If 'sometimes' foods like hot potato chips are removed from the data, only 1% of children in early childhood are eating the recommended amount of vegetables. For fruit the numbers are higher with 78% of 2-3 year olds and 59% of 4-8 year olds eating the recommended amount. ⁷
- **Meal Environments**
"Experiences with eating early in life can affect attitudes and habits later on, as well as influence health". Adults having negative attitudes towards foods or using food as a reward or threat can have negative effects on children's long term eating practices. ⁴

Australian Recommendations advise:

- Exclusive breastfeeding until around six months of age. At around six months babies will need solid foods as well as breastmilk (or infant formula). Parents who breastfeed are encouraged to keep going until 12 months and longer, if mother and baby wish. ¹
- Children who are in long day care should be offered at least half the serves of fruit and vegetables shown for their age in the Australian Dietary Guidelines. ²
- Babies who have started their first foods should be offered fruit and vegetables from the main menu (or food provided by their parents/carers). The fruits and vegetables offered should suit with the baby's stage of eating. Most babies will move quickly from pureed to mashed foods and on to finger foods.

Tips and strategies

Encouraging breastfeeding

Returning to work is often a barrier to breastfeeding and may happen at the same time that a child starts at your service. You can play a vital role in supporting the mothers at your service to breastfeed for the first 12 months and beyond. Here are some things you can do:

- Tell families that your service supports breastfeeding. For example, on first contact and at orientation sessions.
- Join the Australian Breastfeeding Association's 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here Program' to show your staff, service families and community that you welcome breastfeeding. Consider becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Accredited Workplace through the Australian Breastfeeding Association – this supports your staff to be able to breastfeed too.

- Follow Public Health Service's [Breastmilk Safe Handling Practices and guidelines](#) available on the *Move Well Eat Well* website.

Encouraging fruit and vegetables

- Children need lots of opportunities to get to know and to try new foods including fruit and vegetables.
- Make sure your service offers a range of fruits and vegetables, and other everyday foods, at each meal and snack. Then let the babies and children choose how much they want to eat (if anything).
- Encourage educators to eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables with the children – this will show them that eating these foods is a normal part of growing up.
- Work as a team with the families who come to your service to give their children the best possible start. Share information about what your service is doing to help their children grow healthy, happy and strong. You may also wish to share resources that are aimed to help parents do the same at home. Visit the '[Plant Fruit and Veg in Your Lunchbox](#)' section on the website for resources.
- It is a good idea to incorporate fruit and vegetables into the activities that you do. For example:
 - reading positive stories about fruit and vegetables
 - getting the children to grow seedlings to take home for Christmas
 - getting the children to help prepare some fruit and vegetable dishes
 - having a selection of fruit and vegetable toys to play with
 - showing posters about seasonal fruit and vegetables
 - asking families to share their favourite fruit and vegetable recipes –use ideas in menu planning or lunchbox ideas
 - celebrating events that can be used to promote fruit and vegetables such as World Food Day and Children's Week
 - connect with a local grocer or grower and see if you can arrange an excursion or perhaps a fruit and veg discount.
- For services that provide meals or snacks use the following resources to assist with menu planning:
 - Feeding Babies in Early Childhood Education and Care
 - [Early childhood services menu planning guidelines and self-assessment tool – Full meal provision](#)
 - [Early childhood services menu planning guidelines and self-assessment tool – Morning and afternoon tea provision](#)

Positive meal environments

A positive meal environment in a child care setting is one where:

- distractions are minimised
- children get to sit and eat socially with their peers and educators
- children are given the opportunity to try a variety of foods and to serve themselves (where age-appropriate)
- children get to eat as much or as little of the food on offer without pressure
- children are given plenty of time to eat at their own speed
- educators avoid making comments about food likes and dislikes or children's eating
- educators avoid commenting on body shape or size (their own or the children's)
- foods are not labelled as 'good' or 'bad' but referred to as 'sometimes' or 'everyday' ^{5,6}

Linking with families

It is really important that you take the time to connect with families about the work you are doing to help their children grow happy and strong. Here are some things that you can do:

- When the child enrolls tell families about your service's policies on healthy eating. It is a good idea to explain in person and provide a simply written information sheet. Make sure you are clear about what foods and drinks can be sent in lunchboxes or foods that are offered by the service.
 - Display the menu in the sign-in area along with photos of children enjoying their lunch.
 - If you are a lunchbox service, the lunchbox posters from *Move Well Eat Well* can be displayed.
 - Send newsletters by email or hard-copy and include seasonal fruit and vegetable recipes from the service or lunchbox ideas. You could get parents to send in their ideas too.
 - Give extra time to help families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is a good idea to get staff to do cultural competency training as well. Contact *Move Well Eat Well* to find out if Public Health Services is facilitating any training.
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Activities

Magic minestrone and fantastic fruit salad activities

In winter each child brings a vegetable for soup to share. In summer, children can bring seasonal fruits and vegetables for a fantastic summer fruit salad or vegetable salad to share. From this children are able to try different foods, develop food skills and enjoy sharing food.

Fruit and or vegetable tasting day

Why not try taste-testing a variety of fruits and/or vegetables? You can build children's confidence with trying new foods by talking about colour, texture and taste. Use fruits and vegetables that are juicy, need peeling, tropical fruits, berries, fruit or veg grown on trees and vines or below the ground. How do they look, taste, smell and grow? Put up photos of these so children can match and compare them. Remember to check with parents before food tasting.

Funny faces

Cut up a range of age-appropriate fruit and vegetables and let the children make their own funny faces for morning tea. Have a couple of examples to give the children ideas. Take photos and display in the room and/or send home.

Edible gardens

Fruit and vegetable gardens help children to learn about where food comes from as well as giving them other useful skills and experiences. Children can learn and develop:

- Responsibility –caring for and tending plants.
- Understanding –learning about cause and effect (for example, plants die without water).
- Love of nature – from learning about the outdoor environment in a safe and pleasant place.
- Reasoning and discovery –learning about science, botany, nutrition and construction.
- Cooperation – including shared activity and teamwork.
- Self-confidence and creativity – from achieving their goals, enjoying the food they have grow and finding new and exciting ways to grow food.
- Nutrition – learning about sources of food and how to cook the produce from the garden.
- Partnerships – involving parents, grandparents and community members in the project.
- Motor skills and coordination – gardening is a great way to get active with young children.

Healthy home corner

Set up the home corner as a fruit and vegetable shop or café. The children can make up a fruit and vegetable focussed menu by cutting out pictures from magazines, bringing them from home or drawing them. The children can also make fruit and vegetable pictures or models to 'sell' at the shop.

Success stories

Support Breastfeeding

A southern Early Learning Centre supports and encourages breastfeeding. Posters promoting breastfeeding are displayed in the entrance and in the rooms catering for children 0-2 years. Information about the benefits of breastfeeding and how the service provides support and encouragement is given to new families.

Information booklets are available to family members. The Centre has a room where families or educators can sit comfortably to express milk or feed. There are also comfortable couches in the rooms for under 3's. Educators receive training about the safe handling of breast milk.

Menu planning

At a Child Care Centre in the North, the cook plans a four-week cycle menu. Families are encouraged to give feedback on the menu and suggest new healthy meals that could be added. Each month the centre newsletter includes healthy eating ideas for families. Educators, cooks and families have been involved in choosing information and recipes to be included.

Patch to plate

At Stewart Child Care Service in Launceston a vegetable garden with spinach, parsley and tomatoes is maintained by the children and educators. Children help with planting, watering and weeding. Children have been picking the spinach and taking it to the kitchen so it can be included in the lunchtime menu. Popular dishes using the produce include shepherd's pie with a layer of spinach and wilted spinach as a side dish to other main meals.

Where to go next Website

The following sections of *Move Well Eat Well* website can help provide support and useful tools to help you with the '*Plant Fruit and Veg in your Lunchbox*' message and criterion:

- [Plant Fruit and Veg in your Lunchbox 'Early Childhood Services' section](#)
- [Plant Fruit and Veg in your Lunchbox 'Families' section](#)

References

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