BABY & INFANT BOTTLE PREPARATION & HANDLING POLICY

Purpose

As young children (particularly those under 12 months) are still developing their immune system, they are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses and infection. This makes it imperative that education and care services implement and maintain the highest level of hygiene practices. Insight Early Learning will ensure that safe practices are consistently maintained for handling, storing, preparing and heating breast milk and formula. Educators will sterilise and prepare bottles safely and hygienically in accordance with recognised guidelines and best practice, and all educators preparing and/or handling bottles will have undergone training in safe food handling. Insight Early Learning ensures that babies' and infants' nutritional needs are met by providing milk, formula or breast milk as instructed by families. This policy is guided by Staying Healthy (5th Edition) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Eat for Health Infant Feeding Guidelines: Information for Health Workers (2012), as well as best practice procedures from leading early childhood authorities.

Scope

This policy applies to educators, staff, and management.

Legislative Requirements

Education and Care National Law	
Regulation 77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
Regulation 78	Food and beverages
Regulation 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

Relevant National Quality Standard (NQS) Elements

Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety	
Standard 2.1	Health – Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
Element 2.1.2	Health practices and procedures – Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
Element 2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyles – Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
Standard 2.2	Safety – Each child is protected.
Element 2.2.1	Supervision – At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Implementation

Definitions

- **Newborn:** Newborn usually refers to a baby from birth to about 2 months of age.
- **Infants:** Infants can be considered children anywhere from birth to 1 year old.
- **Babies:** Babies can be used to refer to any child from birth to age 4 years old, thus encompassing newborns, infants, and toddlers.

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During their first year of life, infants are at their most vulnerable to viruses, bacteria, and parasitic infections, due to their immune system not yet being fully developed. Unsafe or careless food handling practices can lead to anything from a mild attack of thrush to a more serious condition of gastroenteritis, all of which are similar to food poisoning and can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and subsequent dehydration. To ensure that bottles are consistently prepared safely and hygienically, educators will adhere to Service procedures at all times.

Formula

Before preparing formula

- Ensure you wash your hands and the work bench are clean.
- Families are required to bring in bottles with prepared boiled water that has been left to cool for approximately 30 minutes. Cooled boiled water is also available in the kitchen, if needed.

Preparing formula

- Do not compact the formula powder in the scoop, and always ensure the correct ratio of formula to water as specified on the tin: too little formula powder may leave the infant hungry, whilst too much can cause constipation.
- Always use a sterilised knife to level the top of the scoop when measuring the formula powder.
- Without touching the teat, shake the bottle well to mix the contents.
- Place the made-up formula bottle in the bottle warming device and follow the manufacturer's guidelines for warming the bottle (see steps for heating bottles).

Responsibilities of parents

- All bottles/formula containers should be clearly labelled with your child's name.
- Insight Early Learning asks parents to provide formula and cooled boiled water separately with written instructions for the Educators, as well as any other relevant information that would be useful for Educators to be aware of, e.g. if your child is a slow drinker, if they require burping half way through, if they are attempting to self-feed etc.
- The safest way to transport formula is to take the cooled, boiled water and the powdered formula in separate containers and mix them when needed.

Storing and Documenting

- Prepare formula as it is needed.
- Any remaining formula should be thrown out if an infant does not finish a bottle: it should not be frozen or reheated.
- Ensure bottles are clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Document the amount of milk each infant consumed, including the time of feeds, on the Playground app.
- Communicate regularly with families about infant and children's feeding patterns and routines.

Breastmilk

Insight Early Learning encourages and supports mothers where possible to provide expressed breast milk or to visit the Service to feed their babies. Encouraging words from an educator go a long way to helping a mother who is trying to juggle work and breastfeeding.

Information for parents

- If frozen: breast milk should be transported to the Service in an esky with a freezer brick and placed immediately into the back of the refrigerator on arrival (or in the freezer section if still frozen, so it remains so).
- If expressed/never frozen: breast milk should be transported to the Service in an esky with a freezer brick and placed immediately into the back of the refrigerator on arrival.

- Expressed milk should always be clearly labelled with the child's name, when the milk was expressed, and if it has ever been frozen/when it was defrosted. This ensures that the child receives the correct milk and minimises the risk of illness.
- Instructions should be provided in writing to Educators regarding any relevant information that would be useful for them to be aware of, e.g. if your child is a slow drinker, if they require burping half way through, if they are attempting to self-feed etc.

Thawing frozen breast milk

- Place the frozen breast milk container in the refrigerator on a flat surface, away from other food items.
- Allow the breast milk to thaw slowly in the refrigerator for 24 hours or until fully thawed.
- Once thawed, gently swirl the breast milk to mix the fat that may have separated during freezing.
- Use the thawed breast milk within 24 hours.

Preparing and heating formula and breastmilk using a bottle warmer

- Follow manufacturer's instructions: always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for your specific bottle warmer, as different bottle warmers may have different settings and usage instructions.
- Thaw breast milk before using the bottle warmer: once fully thawed, transfer it to the bottle warmer for warming. This ensures the breast milk is thawed evenly and avoids hot spots that may occur when thawing directly in a bottle warmer.
- Use appropriate temperature settings: the ideal temperature for breast milk is around body temperature, approximately 37°C (98.6°F). Avoid overheating, as it can cause a loss of nutrients and quality. Always check the temperature using a thermometer before feeding.
- Be mindful of time: follow the manufacturer's recommended warming times and use a timer to keep track.
- Clean and maintain the bottle warmer properly after each use, removing any milk residue or build-up.
- Do not shake breast milk to mix it. Breast milk will form layers after standing — this separation is normal. Gently roll the bottle to mix it again.
- Before feeding the baby, check the temperature of the milk by letting a little drop onto the inside of your wrist — it should feel comfortably warm or even a little cool.
- Never microwave breast milk.
- Never refreeze thawed breast milk.

Storing breastmilk

- Refrigerated at 4°C or lower.
- Used within 24 hours.
- Stored on a shelf of the refrigerator, not in the door.
- Frozen in a separate freezer section of a refrigerator at a temperature of -18°C.

Documenting

- Document the amount of breast milk each infant consumed, including the time of feeds, on the Playground app.
- Communicate regularly with families about infant and children's feeding patterns and routines.

Bottles

Storing bottles

- Store bottles in a clean and appropriate area for food preparation that complies with food safety standards.
- Ensure bottles are clearly labelled with the child's name.
- If not using sterilised bottles immediately, care needs to be taken to store them correctly to avoid them coming into contact with bacteria.
- Using sterile tongs, place the teat 'upside-down' in the bottle, and place the sterilised cap and lid on the bottle.

- Store bottles in a clean place away from dust.
- If not used within 24 hours, sterilised bottles should be sterilised again before use.

Individual feeding routines

- Adhere to each child's feeding routine.
- Encourage families to communicate regularly with educators about children's bottle and feeding requirements.
- Children will not be forced to finish bottles.
- Children will not be left unattended to finish bottles.
- Educators will give infants their bottles in chairs, pillows or on the couch (not in bed).
- Children that are walking and on beds are able to have their bottles in their beds; however, it will need to be removed if they fall asleep, and they will need to be supervised whilst they have their bottle.

Hygiene and handwashing

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling bottles, breast milk, or formula.
- Follow safe food handling practices.
- Adhere to procedures for the safe storage and heating of food provided in bottles.

Sterilising dummies

- After sterilising dummies for infants, it is important to remember not to touch any part that will go into the baby's mouth with your hands. Sterilising systems generally come with tongs for this purpose, which must also be sterilised with the items.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions that come with the sterilising system and ensure that the recommended sterilising times are strictly adhered to.
- Prior to using any sterilising system or device, or removing items from a steriliser, staff will wash their hands — the single most effective way of preventing the spread of infection.

Steam sterilising of dummies

- Electric steam sterilising is based on hospital methods and is quick and efficient, taking eight to twelve minutes plus cooling time. Care must be taken that only dummies safe to boil are sterilised this way. Dummies must be placed upside down with sufficient room (not touching any other item) to ensure they are fully sterilised.

Microwave steamers

- Take around five to eight minutes to work, plus cooling time. Where possible, leave the lid on the steriliser until it has cooled sufficiently to prevent steam burns. If using a microwave for sterilising, ensure that a purpose-designed sterilisation container is used.

Related Policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Bottled Breast Milk Policy
- Nutrition and Food Safety Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as legislation, regulations, or best practice changes.

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