NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY POLICY

Purpose

Insight Early Learning is committed to a safe, supportive environment that promotes children's health and wellbeing. Our services are egg- and nut-aware, providing nutritious meals that respect cultural and dietary needs, and actively promote healthy eating practices support lifelong wellbeing.

Scope

This policy applies to all Insight Early Learning services, people and activities involving food, beverages, including those provided by the service, brought from home, or consumed during events and excursions.

Legislative Requirements

Relevant Education and Care Services National Regulations	
Regulation	**Description**
77 – 80	Health, Hygiene and safe food practices Food and beverages Service providing food and beverages Weekly Menu
168 (2) and 170	Have in place policies and procedures in relation to nutrition food and beverages dietary requirements and ensure policies and procedures are followed

Relevant National Quality Standard (NQS) Elements

QA2 - Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

Implementation

We follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines, providing a balanced variety from the five food groups, with age-appropriate portion sizes. Our menus:

- Include at least one serve from each food group daily
- Provide approximately 50% of recommended daily nutrient intake
- Are served at regular intervals
- They are varied to introduce diverse healthy foods
- Are displayed weekly and reviewed regularly

DOCUMENT CONTROL					
Policy Title	Nutrition and Food Safety Policy				
Document Owner	Angela Dorrian		**Document Author**	Angela Dorrian	
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- Incorporate input from families, educators, and children, respecting cultural and religious requirements

Importance of healthy eating

Mealtimes are relaxed social occasions where educators model healthy eating and engage positively with children. We offer small portions to encourage tasting and create a positive eating experience.

Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding

We support breastfeeding with private spaces and milk storage and encourage breastfeeding. Infant formula and bottle feeding follow safe, practices in partnership with families. Solid foods are introduced in consultation with families and are tailored to the development of each child.

Food from home

Only formula, breastmilk, or food specified in an individual support plan may be brought from home, clearly labelled and stored safely to avoid contamination.

Supporting Special Dietary Needs

Insight Early Learning accommodates children with allergies, intolerances, sensory processing needs, and other special dietary requirements through individualised support and risk minimisation plans developed collaboratively with families and healthcare professionals.

Dietary information, including allergies and cultural or religious food practices, is collected at enrolment and as needs change throughout the child's enrolment with Insight Management plans are created in line with our Medical Conditions Policy and regularly updated.

All relevant staff and food handlers are informed of each child's dietary needs to ensure safety and inclusion. Individualised Menus are created to exclude allergens and restricted foods as necessary.

Food brought from home for children with special dietary needs follows strict packaging, labelling, and storage protocols. Staff receive ongoing training in allergy awareness and management to maintain a safe environment.

Insight Early Learning Menu

Our menu is carefully designed to meet the nutritional needs of the children in our care, featuring a variety of healthy foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, lean meats, and protein-rich alternatives.

Key points include:

- Menus are planned and displayed weekly, meeting at least 50% of children's daily nutritional requirements.
- Healthy snacks complement meals, providing sufficient energy and nutrients.
- Menus are varied to introduce children to diverse healthy foods.
- We regularly review menus against best practice guidelines.
- Family, educator, and child input is considered, including cultural and religious dietary needs.
- Weekly menus are displayed prominently for parents and accurately describe daily food and drink offerings.
- Any menu changes are documented and reviewed to ensure ongoing nutritional adequacy.

Beverages served at the service

Insight Early Learning recognises the importance of hydration for children's health and well-being. Fresh drinking water is available to children throughout the day and milk is offered at mealtimes as a nutritious beverage option.

Positive and Safe Mealtimes

Mealtimes support wellbeing, independence, and social development. Educators sit with children, respect dietary differences, and avoid pressuring children to eat or use food as reward or punishment. Safe eating practices are modelled and supervised to reduce choking risks and accidents.

Educational Experiences in Nutrition

At Insight Early Learning, we believe children learn best through hands-on, meaningful experiences. We provide opportunities that promote healthy eating habits and build an understanding of nutrition through activities such as:

- Gardening and growing food
- Cooking and food preparation
- Sensory exploration of fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients
- Cooking Experiences – age appropriate and safety supervised activities that support fine motor development, introduce mathematical concepts (e.g. measuring, counting) and promote healthy food choices.
- Self-serve meal time

All cooking activities follow safe food handling practices and are designed to be enjoyable, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate. These experiences support children in developing lifelong healthy habits in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

Purchasing Food

Insight Early Learning ensures that all food purchases prioritise safety, quality, and compliance with food safety standards.

- Orders are placed promptly to avoid last-minute shopping.
- All food items are checked for 'use by' and 'best before' dates. Perishable foods past their use-by date are never purchased. Damaged, swollen, leaking, or dented packaging is avoided.
- Fresh meat, poultry, and fish are packed carefully to prevent leaks and cross-contamination.

Transporting Food

Chilled, frozen, and hot foods are purchased last, transported in insulated bags or coolers, and unpacked immediately.

All food is kept out of the 'danger zone' (5°C–60°C) to prevent bacterial growth.

Online Orders

Online food suppliers are selected based on quality guarantees and safe delivery practices.

Deliveries are checked for appropriate temperature control and are unpacked immediately upon arrival.

Storage of food

Insight Early Learning is committed to safe food storage practices that prevent spoilage and bacterial growth, ensuring compliance with all relevant food safety regulations.

- All food is stored in appropriate, food-safe containers at the correct temperatures, and kept away from potential contaminants.
- Food is labelled with the date of preparation, and any items past their use-by date are discarded.
- Refrigerator and freezer temperatures are checked daily, maintained at or below 5°C and -17°C respectively.
- To prevent cross-contamination, raw foods are stored below cooked foods in the refrigerator.
- Fresh meat is stored for no more than three days.
- Foods not in their original packaging are labelled with the food name, use-by date, opening date, and allergen information. Opened cans are transferred to suitable containers, and bottles and jars are refrigerated after opening.
- Leftover hot foods are cooled promptly by placing in shallow, sealed containers once steam subsides and refrigerated immediately. Cooling methods are aligned with food hygiene standards including monitoring and recording of cooling temperatures and timeframes.
- Disposable containers are not reused. Dry foods are stored in sealed, labelled, airtight containers. Bulk dry foods are stored similarly and rotated using the FIFO (first in, first out) system to use older stock first.

- Cleaning supplies and chemicals are stored separately from food items.
- Breastmilk and infant formula are stored in the main section of the refrigerator, clearly labelled with the child's name and preparation date.

Serving food

At Insight Early Learning, all food preparation is conducted in a clean and hygienic environment using sanitized utensils and equipment. Food preparation complies with our Food Safety Program as well as Food Standards Australia and applicable local regulations.

- All staff involved in food handling are trained in food safety practices.
- Cooked foods are cooked thoroughly to at least 75°C and served promptly or maintained at above 60°C until served using a food thermometer.
- Prepared cold foods are stored in refrigerators maintained below 5°C until served. Any cooked food left in the temperature 'danger zone' (between 5°C and 60°C) for two or more hours is discarded immediately.
- Cooked and ready-to-eat foods are kept separate from raw foods to avoid contamination. Foods are defrosted safely in the refrigerator or microwave only.
- Fruits and vegetables are washed thoroughly under clean running water prior to preparation, and unused washed produce is dried completely before storage.
- Any food dropped on the floor is discarded immediately. Utensils and equipment are cleaned thoroughly between different food types and tasks.
- Cross-contamination is prevented through the use of colour-coded cutting boards and changing gloves between handling different foods or tasks.
- Staff preparing food for children with allergies or intolerances are trained in allergy management.
- Meals for children with allergies or intolerances are served individually on easily identifiable plates, covered securely with plastic wrap and labelled to prevent cross-contamination.
- Staff who are unwell do not handle food, and an illness register is kept for all team members who handle food
- Leftover food is refrigerated immediately or discarded.
- The safe handling of breast milk, including during transport, storage, thawing, warming, and preparation - is ensured in line with the Baby and Infant Bottle Preparation and Handling Policy.

Cleaning the Kitchen

At Insight Early Learning, maintaining a clean and hygienic kitchen environment is essential to food safety. We ensure that all food preparation areas and surfaces are thoroughly cleaned before, during, and after food preparation.

- All cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitized before use.
- Dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and either air-dried or placed in the dishwasher.
- Food storage areas are kept clean, well-ventilated, dry, free from pests, and protected

from direct sunlight.
- Refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly, with door seals inspected and replaced if damaged or worn.
- Pest infestations are prevented by promptly cleaning spills and frequently disposing of rubbish and food scraps.
- Floor mops and other cleaning equipment are thoroughly cleaned and air-dried after each use; equipment showing signs of wear or permanent soiling is replaced promptly.

Personal Hygiene for Handling Food (Chef)

Insight Early Learning recognises the critical role of personal hygiene in food safety. All staff handling food adhere to strict hygiene practices, including:

- Wearing clean clothing such as aprons or appropriate jackets while preparing food.
- Tying back long hair or covering it with a hair net.
- Removing hand and wrist jewelry to prevent contamination.
- Keeping nails short, clean, and free of nail polish to avoid chipping and dirt accumulation.
- Washing hands rigorously each time they return to the kitchen or before continuing food preparation duties.
- Covering wounds or cuts with brightly coloured, waterproof dressings that are easy to spot if dislodged, and wearing gloves over dressings.
- Ensuring that staff who are unwell do not prepare or handle food.

Communicating with Families About Meals and Menu Feedback

We keep families connected to their child's mealtime experiences by:

- Sharing photos and daily meal documentation via the Playground App
- Offering weekly menu tastings to families with advance notice
- Encouraging family feedback to improve menus
- Incorporating children's preferences and feedback into menu planning to foster ownership and enthusiasm for healthy eating