**NUTRITION AND CATERING**

**INTRODUCTION**

Nutrition begins with food. Nutrition is the process by which the body nourishes itself by transforming food into energy and body tissues.

A good diet protects your child from illness & a healthy, nutritious meal is essential for a healthy body.

Young children’s need for energy and nutrients is high but their appetites are small and they can be fussy eaters too. It can therefore be a challenge to get a child’s diet right.

Pre school children normally eat the amount they want, even if it seems they’re not taking in very much. At this age children are often good at regulating their appetite. If they are not hungry, insisting on larger amounts of food can create a battle and lead to longer term issues with food.

We at Great Minds ECC recognize the importance of children being provided with healthy, nutritious & wholesome food as part of a balanced diet.

Good eating habits are promoted from the youngest of ages & we hope this initiative will set the pattern for a child’s future relationship with food.

**NUTRITIONAL INTAKE/ FOOD GROUPS**

Children’s intake should be based on the following to ensure that they get all the important nutrients: Each main dish must include at least three of the following Food Groups. If it is a main course combo or full meal combo, it should also include a side dish and/or beverage from the other food groups as per their specified definition.

# Carbohydrates/Grains & Starch ( Preferably whole grains)

At least one kind of starch carbohydrate such as bread, rice, pasta, noodles, quinoa, amaranth, millet, cereal or potatoes should be served with their meal (preferably lunch). These provide the energy needed to learn, play and live **–** include brown rice and whole meal bread (rather than white).

Recommendation: It is recommended that at least fifty percent of your cereal intake should come from whole grains and cereals high in fiber such as brown rice, whole wheat breads, and whole-wheat pastas. The main nutrients provided by this group are carbohydrates, B vitamins, and fibers.

# Fruits ( Either as whole, sliced or as a main ingredient 50% of a dessert)

# Vegetables ( Either cooked or as salad)

Children should have at least three servings a day, where a serving is about a handful in size. Frozen or canned fruit and vegetables should be avoided. Fruits & vegetables are a good source of vitamins which promote healthy skin and support the immune system to help prevent or even fight illness.

Recommendation: It is recommended to choose whole and freshly cut fruits and vegetables over canned fruits in syrups

**Protein (Preferably lean)**

This group consists of meat (chicken and red meat), eggs, seafood such as fish (especially oily fish) and shellfish. This group also consists of all the legumes, pulses and beans such as kidney beans, green beans, soybeans, lentils, and chickpeas.

Recommendation: Choose boiled, grilled and lean meats over fried or highly processed meat products such as canned meats, and deli meats. The main nutrients provided by this group of foods are proteins, and iron mainly from meat.

# Milk and Dairy Products

These are an important source of calcium. Children should have the equivalent of 300-500ml of milk a day. Consider whole pasteurized cow’s milk (3.25% milk fat) or whole pasteurized goat’s milk fortified with vitamin D and folic acid. Milk, yogurt, cheese are all considered from the dairy group. Milk can be used on cereals or in drinks, puddings and sauces. Grated cheese, cheese spread or cheese portions can be used on sandwiches or toast or even eaten alone. These help to develop healthy teeth, bones and muscles.

Our meal times are important & enjoyable for both staff & children. Sharing the same meal time facilitates calm social interaction & table-top etiquette.

Recommendation: Low fat milk and milk products are preferred over full fat milk. Processed cheese slices and spreads, and creams etc should be limited. The main nutrients provided by this group of foods are protein, calcium and Vitamin D.

**Healthy Fats**

This group includes all the food items that provide fats and oil. Avocado, Olive oil, butter, vegetable oil, lard, ghee, nuts and oilseeds are under this category. Healthier sources of fat are sunflower oil, olive oil, canola oil, and other plant based oils.

Recommendation: Consume at least one spoon every day to ensure good intake of healthy fats. Avoid excess consumption of foods cooked in partially hydrogenated or saturated fats. The main nutrients provided by this group are essential fatty acids. Avoid deep fried food, margarine, butter, food cooked in lard, full cream in desserts, fried & sugar coated nuts.

**Water & Fluids**

Human body consists of 60% of water. Therefore, it is important to keep the body hydrated at all times.

Recommendation: Best sources of fluids are plain water, low fat milk, and fresh fruit and vegetable juices. Children should avoid drinks with added sugar such as flavored drinks, and vitamin waters, sports drinks, energy drinks etc. Fresh fruit juices should be preferred over canned and bottled juices.

Choose from natural water, home made soup, fresh juices. They provide minerals & electrolytes. Avoid soft drinks, sugary beverages, energy drinks.

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| **Foods to provide** | **Examples of foods that could be provided** |
| **A portion of starchy food** (provide a variety of different starchy foods each week, including a wholegrain variety for lunch once a week) | 1 cup ready to eat cereal  1 ounce or 1 slice of White or wholegrain  bread, rolls, pitta bread or wraps.  Quinoa, millet, amaranth.  Chapattis, plain naan, bagels.  ½ cup cooked rice cooked pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potato. |
| **At least one portion of fruit and/or vegetables**  (provide a variety of different fruit and vegetables each week) | Carrot, cucumber, pepper or celery sticks. Lentils included in dal.  Grated carrot in sandwiches or wraps.  Fresh fruit such as sliced apple, banana, grapes cut in halves, mixed chopped fruit or strawberries.  Dried fruit such as raisins or apricots. |
| **A portion of meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy sources of protein** (provide a variety of different foods each week) | 1 ounce lean meat, poultry or fish in sandwiches, rolls or wraps, or by itself.  Sliced egg in sandwiches, rolls or wraps. Meat alternatives such as tofu in salads.  ¼ cup cooked kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, as part of bean salads. |
| **A portion of milk or dairy food.** | 1cup yoghurt  1 ounces hard cheese, cheese in sandwiches or wraps.  1 cup Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children two and over) to  drink. |
| **Desserts, cakes, biscuits** | Desserts, cakes and biscuits made with cereals, milk or fruit only.  Without sugar, nuts, chocolate or sugary toppings. |
| **A drink** | Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children aged two and over).  Water. |

**EFFECTS OF DIET ON HEALTH OF CHILDREN**

Poor eating habits are major risk factors for chronic diseases. Poor diet can have both long-term and short-term effects on children. Some health impacts are; Obesity, Diabetes, Undernutrition/Malnutrition, Eating Disorders

**EFFECTS OF CHILDHHOD EATING HABITS & ITS IMPACT ON CHRONIC DISEASES DURING ADULTHOOD**

Children and adolescents who are obese are likely to be obese as adults and are therefore more at risk for health problems such as heart disease, type-2 diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.

**GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING**

* Consume a variety of nutritious foods from the different food groups
* Eat with moderation to maintain a healthy weight
* Increase the consumption of fiber through higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, legumes/pulses, wholegrain cereals and whole grain bread
* Prefer lean white meats over red ones and limit the consumption of processed meats (sausages, nuggets)
* Consume more fresh fish
* Limit the consumption of foods that are high in sugar, salt and saturated fat.
* Prefer home-made fresh foods prepared steaming, boiling, baking or grilling, rather than frying.
* Limit the consumption of salty foods and processed foods with high content of salt
* Consume meals around the table and turn off electronic devices (TV, tablets, mobile phones) to avoid overeating
* Drink plenty of water and avoid sweetened beverages including energy drinks and flavored drinks
* Balance the food you eat with physical activity and an active lifestyle

**GUIDELINES TO PREPARE MEALS & SNACKS**

* Each meal must meet minimum calorie requirement
* Portion size of meals must be controlled.
* Each meal must include at least 3 of the following food groups (Grains, fruits and vegetables, meats and pulses, dairy products, and nuts and oil).
* Make water available to ensure adequate fluid intake during breaks
* Each meal should contain 50% of carbohydrates coming from whole grains
* Each meal should have at least one source of fiber daily such as fruits and vegetables
* Fruits should be available as an option for all age groups and during all breaks. Fruits that are fresh, frozen, or canned in 100% juice can be served.
* Meals must contain at least one source of protein like meat (such as chicken), or fish (such as tuna), or dairy products (such as labneh), or beans and pulses to supply optimum protein in lunch.
* Fried food should not be served with meals.
* Limit the availability of sugar dense and high calorie snacks e.g. croissants, cookies, confectionary etc.
* Provide correct portion sizes of the available snacks whether freshly prepared in the premises or sold from external vendors.

**ALLERGINS**

These would include;

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| Crustaceans and their products (prawns, shells) | Peanuts and their products |
| Soybeans and their products | Tree nuts and their products |
| Sesame seeds and their products | Fish and fish products |
| Egg and egg products | Milk and milk products |
| Gluten and cereals containing gluten (Kamut, wheat, rye, oats, barley and spelt). |  |

**LIST OF FOODS RESRICTED:**

1. **Carbonated Drinks- All types of sodas, fizzy drinks, soft drinks.**
2. **Non carbonated drinks- All type of sugar sweetened drinks, energy drinks, flavored vitamin and mineral water or drinks, sports water, fruit flavored drinks**
3. **Foods with flavor enhancers- Flavor enhancers can cover poor nutritional quality of certain food and also contribute to the sodium intake.**
4. **Confectionary- bubble gum, candy bars, lollies, jeally beans, marshmellows**
5. **Deep fried foods**
6. **Milk & milk products- Ice cream, chocolate based shakes, artificially flavored yoghurt, artificially flavored milk.**
7. **Bakery products- Cakes, pastries, donuts, cookies.**
8. **Sauces & dips- Mayonaise, cream based dips.**
9. **Artifical Sweetners**
10. **Processed/ high salt content food- pickled vegetables, hotdogs, mortadella**
11. **Peanuts and their products**
12. **Tree nuts and their products**
13. **Sesame seeds and their products**
14. **Crustaceans and their products (e.g. prawns, shells)**
15. **Soybeans and their products**
16. **Non-halal foods**
17. **Processed meats – like deli or lunch meats, and other cured meats such as hotdogs, mortadella and other commercially processed burgers, meat and chicken nuggets.**

**POINTS TO FOLLOW:**

1. **Only Halal food is permitted & consumed within the premises.**
2. **Children with food allergens should be noted in the medical file and parents should keep the Center updated if any new allergies are discovered.**
3. **Sharing of food isn’t allowed to avoid allergic reactions as well as to ensure cultural reservations are followed.**
4. **Parents should not pack any snack that could be a choking hazard. For example, grapes are allowed only if cut in half, fruits should be washed, pitted, and cut.**
5. **All the food packed in lunch boxes must be labeled including the name of child and time of the meal (for example, is it morning snack/breakfast or lunch).**
6. **Parents should send cutlery for the day in the lunch box. Used cutlery, meal boxes and bibs (if provided) will be returned in lunch boxes without being washed at the nursery.**
7. **All food should be packed in ready prepared form for eating and in a temperature safe box that will keep food cold/hot until eating time. In addition, it is suggested to keep small ice pack in your child’s lunch box if provided food should remain cold.**
8. **If your child is using** [**formula or** [**expressed breastmilk**](https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a8791/expressing-breastmilk)](https://www.babycentre.co.uk/x554974/how-do-i-store-formula-when-i-am-out-and-about-for-the-day)**, parents should provide packed sterilized bottles, a bottle warmer and measured formula. If a parent wishes to provide frozen breast milk it must be stored in an insulated bag with ice packs (breast milk can be safe to use for a maximum of 24 hours if stored accordingly). Please make sure you have enough bottles and** [**expressed breastmilk**](https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a8791/expressing-breastmilk) **or formula milk for the whole day.**
9. **Children will be encouraged to handle their own food containers**.

**Birthday Celebrations:** We are happy to celebrate your child’s birthday at the center. For the Montessori birthday celebration, we request you to send us only photographs of your child. Please send us one photo when your child was a newborn baby and follow with one photo for each year. (hard copies or soft copies sent by email). Should you wish to provide any additional goody bags to friends of your child please be informed that they must not include any food. All the goody bags will be given to parents during pick up time.

**CATERING POLICY ACCORDING TO THE FOOD CONTROL DEPARTMENT (MUNCIPALITY)**

A Person in Charge (PIC) is appointed to have overall responsibility of running, proper functioning & ensuring food safety with regards to catering in the center.

The PIC must be certified under the Food Control Department.

The main responsibilities of the PIC is;

1. Cross contamination prevention
2. Time/Temperature control
3. Cleaning & Disinfection
4. Personal & professional health & Hygiene
5. Reporting complaints or emergencies

Foodborne Illnesses

Consuming food that maybe contaminated can cause illnesses. There are different types of bacteria & viruses that can contaminate food. The main ways of contamination include

* Soil/Dust
* Pests/Pets
* Water
* Uncooked food
* Food handlers
* Waste

What are the factors that encourage growth of bacteria/viruses?

* Moisture & humidity
* Oxygen
* Length of time of contact

What is HALAL food?

Food that is allowed under Islamic law. This includes animals & poultry ritually slaughtered by Zabiah.

What is HARAM food?

Unlawful food described as Haram include pork & pork by products, blood, animals dead before slaughter, carnivorous animals, birds of prey, alcohol & or any food contaminated by these products.

NON-HALAL FOOD PRODUCTS ARE NOT HANDLED AT OUR CENTER.

Common Food Hazards are as follows;

1. Microbiological Hazards- Bacteria & Viruses
2. Chemical Hazards- Detergents, disinfectants
3. Allergens- Nuts, milk, shell fish, soya
4. Physical Hazards- Hair, glass, plastic in food

Cross Contamination

It is the physical transfer of harmful bacteria from one source of food to another either directly (touch, droplets) or indirectly (cutlery).

In order to ensure Operational Hygiene is maintained, the following is followed;

* Usage of disposable towels- single use towels
* New utensils to be used for each new task
* Disinfect & clean food production areas
* Empty food packaging, spillages, food waste
* Separation of food during delivery, storage, defrosting, preparation & display

Personal Hygiene:

* To prevent food being contaminated, everyone in food preparation area must maintain high levels of personal hygiene. This includes aprons, shoes, hair nets, gloves.
* Food protection clothing should not be used outside the food production area.
* Biting nails, licking fingers, coughing or sneezing over open food, smoking is not allowed.
* Nails must be kept clean and short. No false nails or nail varnish is permitted.
* Jewelry should not be used. Dubai municipality only allows plain band rings, & small hoop earrings with no removal backs.
* Direct hand contact must be avoided.
* Hand Washing technique according to WHO must be followed for at least 20 seconds before & after handling any food

No employee known to have illnesses is allowed to work in food preparation until at least 48 hours after their illness & associated symptoms have passed. Illnesses must be reported to the manager immediately.

Employees who have open wounds, burns, cuts, abrasions, boils or any skin infection must refrain from handling food or must cover the area. (water proof protector/plasters)

A log must be maintained to report food borne illnesses & the Dubai Municipality must be contacted.

Pest Control contracts are to be maintained to ensure the center is pest free with periodical pest control visits.

Garbage bins should have foot operated lids to avoid hand contact. Garbage bins must be emptied regularly if more than half of the bin is full.

Cleaning & Disinfection

Cleaning followed by disinfection is an important aspect when in the food production area.

High risk areas of contamination that is the work surface area, hot water & detergent, chemical disinfectant, rinsing & air drying must be followed.

Low risk areas of contamination that is the floor, hot water & detergent, rinsing & air drying must be followed.

CCP (Critical Control Point): Delivery of food

* Chilled food: required temperature of 5 C or below
* Hot food: required temperature of 60 C or above

The PIC should keep a log of;

* Temperature checks
* Copies of food delivery notes
* Details of rejected products

Hot Food may be kept on display or kept before serving below 60C for a period of 2 hours. After this it must be discarded & not ingested. Cold Food must be kept 5C or below for a maximum of 4 hours & then discarded. Deliver, unpacking, preparation & display must all be considered when calculation the number of hours. This is called the 2 hour/4 hour rule.

*Food must be clearly labelled with an expiry date.*

A temperature probe is to be used to check the center/thickest part of the food. It is accurate to +/- 1C. The thermometers must be calibrated regularly according to the manufacturer’s instruction. These probes must be cleaned well & dried before use.

Re-heating of food is safe as long as food is cooled down before & then reheated to a temperature higher that cooking temperature (75C). Food cannot be re heated more than once.

Baby Eats Company provides pre-ordered and pre-paid optional catering for Great Minds ECC:

* There is a 4 weeks menu cycle offered per term.
* The menu is subject to slight changes depending on the availability of the ingredients. However it is always be communicated with parents.
* Leftover food should not be sent home after child’s consumption of the meal. However, in circumstances if the child didn’t consume the food at all and it was kept in the fridge we will handle unopened boxes to parents. Our teachers will keep you updated about the quantity of the food your child ate.
* In case of sudden absenteeism for any reason you will be welcome to collect your child's food directly from the center the same day. The food will be stored in the fridge and will be kept below 5 degrees Celsius.
* Monthly/Termly Pre Ordered and prepaid catering is not refundable and there is no option for the cancellation during the month, however in case you wish to freeze your order for any reason and transfer it for the following month/term the caterer requires notification of one week.

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