09 Standard Childcare Practice

**09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes**

**Snack times**

* A ‘snack’ is prepared mid-morning and can be organised according to the discretion of the setting manager e.g. picnic on a blanket.
* Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Fruit or raw vegetables, such as carrot or tomato, are offered in batons, which children should be encouraged to help in preparing. Bananas and other foods are not cut as rounds, but are sliced to minimise a choking hazard.
* Staff join in conversation and encourage children’s independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.
* After Snack children are encouraged to scrape their plates and help wipe the table and sweep the floor.

**Mealtimes**

* Tables are never overcrowded during mealtimes. Some social distancing is encouraged even though it is acknowledged that children will play in close proximity for the rest of the session.
* Children help staff set tables.
* Their food is brought to their room in serving dishes.
* Children wash their hands and sit down as food is ready to be served.
* Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults’ tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are only encouraged to try new foods slowly.
* In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
* Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
* Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and the adults who care for them.
* There are sometimes opportunities for children to eat with friends on other tables.
* After Lunch children are encouraged to help wipe the table and sweep the floor.
* Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch.
* Information for parents is displayed on the parent’s notice board, including:
* Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf>
* Daily menus including identification of any foods containing allergens