

HEALTHY AND HAPPY MEALS IN DAYCARE

Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy in the City of Copenhagen



*“When you’re hungry, you start
to look for something to eat in the kitchen.
Your throat starts to hurt too...”*

Jonathan

City of Copenhagen
Children and Youth Administration
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MEALS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

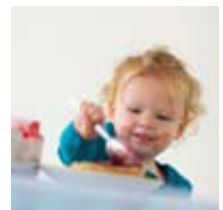
This publication, “Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy in the City of Copenhagen”, is inspired by the lively interest shown by daycare staff and parents in the importance of nutritious meals for young children. The brochure gives daycare staff a source of inspiration for food and meals in daycare. It also gives parents the opportunity to see the approach that the daycare service takes to nutrition and meals. Besides this, anyone with an interest in ensuring that young children eat healthy and balanced meals is welcome to seek inspiration in this publication.

“Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy” is based on the latest knowledge about nutritious food for young children, and adheres to the food and hygiene recommendations of both the Danish National Board of Health and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration. “Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy” is the result of collaboration between the Family and Labour Market Administration, the daycare service’s external nutrition consultant, daycare staff and boards, the Municipal Health Service, and the Public Health Office of the City of Copenhagen.

“Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy” was written in autumn/winter 2003/2004, and approved by the daycare service’s five parental boards in spring 2004.

“Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy” was subsequently revised in 2010, so that the new edition has been fully updated with the latest recommendations.

Else Marie Krogh
Coordinating Daycare Manager, City of Copenhagen



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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Food is an important part of our daily lives – and this naturally applies to daycare too. Children are in daycare for many hours each day, and eat several of the day's meals with their daycare staff.

So it is very important that children are offered healthy food, and that there is a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere at the table in daycare. This stimulates the children's growth and well-being, and helps to establish sound eating and meal habits from the start.

The focus on healthy food and enjoyable meals also gives children the opportunity to develop many other key skills such as enjoying, sensing and tasting, as well as motoric coordination, speaking up for themselves, interacting with others, and taking part in activities.

This brochure describes the framework for the daycare service's policy on food and meals, and explains the individual aspects.

The objective of “Daycare Nutrition and Meals Policy” in daycare

- Create a common understanding and set of values for nutrition and meals that can help to give each child a good start in life
- Help to give children healthy eating and meal habits from an early age, thereby stimulating their growth and development
- Ensure shared responsibility and dialogue with parents on children's diet and meals
- Help to limit children's intake of sugar and fat



NUTRITION IN DAYCARE

THE DAY'S MEALS IN DAYCARE

Young children need many meals, among other things because their stomachs are small and they often get hungry. In addition, their appetites can fluctuate considerably during the day. Some children are hungrier in the morning, while others have a bigger appetite later in the day. A satisfying meal will typically keep them going for a couple of hours. This is why at least four meals a day are served in daycare, so the children can eat their fill when they have the biggest appetite. Besides a filling meal, the children's need for nutrients is also covered better when they are offered different foods distributed across several meals. All meals are therefore equally important.

Daycare offers the following meals:

Breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, and possibly a late afternoon snack.

THE CHILD'S AGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF EATING

In daycare, food is matched to the child's age, as well as his or her eating ability. According to the recommendations, a child can start with spooned food at the age of between 4 and 6 months. Porridge, and fruit and vegetable purees, are good starter foods. At the earliest from 6 months and before 7 months, a little finely chopped fish and meat can be included, as these are also healthy foods. At 7-8 months, it is important that the child can learn to chew the food. If the child learns to chew food from an early age this stimulates the child's development, and makes food more enjoyable. In daycare we serve boiled vegetables and small pieces of soft bread with soft spreads, for example. This stimulates the child's own enjoyment of eating with his or her fingers, and chewing and tasting different foods.

When children this young are served many different ingredients and food of good quality they become accustomed to food's many different smells, flavours and consistencies from an early age. These are all experiences that help to make them like and enjoy food, and prevent fussiness.

From 9 months, children in daycare are offered the same type of food and the same number of meals as the other children in daycare.



COMPOSITION OF MEALS FROM NINE MONTHS VARIETY – SO THE CHILDREN GET A TASTE FOR MORE

A healthy, balanced diet gives children the vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and energy-boosting ingredients they need. All of these nutrients are found naturally in the following four food groups – and also in milk – but in different ratios.

- 1. Bread, ground cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes**
- 2. Fruit and vegetables**
- 3. Fish, meat, eggs, cheese and dairy products**
- 4. Various fats**

Fruit and vegetables, as well as cereals and potatoes, are the food children should eat most of in the course of the day. Children are therefore offered foods from both groups 1 and 2 in all their meals. At lunch, food from group 3 is added. Fat is included in the day's meals in small quantities, according to need and age. If lunch does not include fish, meat or egg the children are offered these foods as part of their snacks, so that they are always offered these nutrients in the course of the day. The purpose of snacks is to supplement lunch, so that the children are offered a variety of foods and are not allowed to go hungry while they are in daycare.

FOODS FROM THE FOUR FOOD GROUPS

In daycare, children are offered food within the framework of the official dietary recommendations. The recommendations are based on a book published by the Danish National Board of Health and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration: "Food for infants & young children – from spoon feeding to family meals" (in Danish only), 11th edition, 1st run 2010, and the eight official dietary recommendations, which are included in the Diet Compass.

The Diet Compass - 8 dietary recommendations



Bread and cereals

In daycare we serve rye bread in at least half of the week's meals that include bread. Other bread varies between other wholegrain bread and more refined bread types (without wholegrain). All bread has a low sugar and fat content, and is heavy, so it fills the children up. Rice cakes, crispbread, rusks and hard biscuits are only rarely served, as they fill the stomach without providing many nutrients, and do not satisfy for very long.

Porridge is mainly oatmeal and other wholegrain porridge. Due to its low nutritional value rice pudding is only offered at Christmas, when it is a traditional dish.

Cereal products with all parts of the grain included are wholegrain cereals. Bread and cereal based on wholegrain have the highest content of dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Young children need dietary fibre because it fills them up and also facilitates digestion. Rye bread and oatmeal are good examples of wholegrain products.

No matter how finely ground the wholegrain is, the nutritional content is still intact as long as all parts of the grain are included. Dark, ground rye bread is therefore just as healthy as rye bread with whole or cracked grain kernels. Young children cannot digest the whole or cracked grains and kernels found in many types of bread until they can chew the bread properly. Children in daycare are therefore offered bread made from ground cereals. As wholegrain bread, especially rye bread, requires the children to chew a lot, their energy intake from the meal may be too low. This means that we vary the types of bread, so the children are also offered more refined white bread without wholegrain, such as bread baked from a mix of wheat and rye flour, and wheat flour buns.

Potatoes, rice and pasta

As potatoes contribute far more nutrients than rice and pasta, daycare staff offer potatoes more often than rice and pasta. Rice, pasta and similar types of cereals can be a variety of wholegrain and more refined white cereal types.

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables contribute many different vitamins and minerals, as well as dietary fibre. They are juicy, tasty, healthy and important sources of nutrients for children.

In daycare we include fruit and vegetables in all of the day's meals, and are aware that in the course of the week children should be offered equal quantities of fruit and vegetables. In order to ensure as many nutrients as possible the children are offered different types of fruit and vegetables. Half of the vegetables offered are the coarser varieties, as these contain more nutrients than other vegetables. Coarse vegetables are green vegetables, root vegetables and pulses (for example beans, peas and lentils).

If snacks primarily comprise fruit, mainly vegetables are offered at lunch. Raw vegetables need a lot of chewing by young children, with the risk that they get tired of chewing before they have eaten enough to fill them up. We take this into account in daycare by mainly offering boiled or oven-baked vegetables that are easier to eat.

Fish

Fish is healthy and rich in nutrients that are hard to source from other foods. Fish is therefore always at least one of the toppings offered in all cold lunches. If daycare serves hot dishes once or twice a week, at least one meal based on fish is offered every second week. If daycare serves hot dishes more than twice a week, at least one meal based on fish per week is offered.

Daycare ensures that various types of fish are served, so that the children can try both white fish and oily fish. White fish is, for example, cod, plaice, pangasius, cod's roe, tinned tuna, shrimps, garfish and skate. Oily fish includes herring, salmon, mackerel, sardines and halibut. We also vary the fish toppings and mainly offer fish toppings with minimum of 50 g fish per 100 grammes.

Meat and eggs

Meat, offal and eggs are good sources of protein, iron and vitamin B, and are an important part of young children's diet. At least one type of meat topping or egg is recommended in all cold lunches. If daycare serves hot dishes once or twice a week, at least one meal based on meat is offered every second week. If daycare serves hot dishes more than twice a week, at least one meal based on meat per week is offered. Daycare staff also offer the children many different types of meat. The fat on meat is unhealthy, however, so the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration recommends that meat and meat toppings contain a maximum of 10 g of fat per 100 grammes.

Pulses such as chick peas, beans and lentils can replace meat in soups, stews, salads and toppings.

Cheese

Cheese is a good source of nutrients, but due to its high content of less healthy fats the recommendations are to choose low-fat cheeses and to limit the children's intake of cheese. In daycare this means that cheese can be part of a few meals in the course of the week. For toppings, cheese with maximum 17 g of fat per 100 grammes is used. To enhance the taste, cheese with a slightly higher fat content can be used in hot dishes, as long as the quantity is limited. Fresh cheese can be used under toppings instead of butter and butter/margarine/oil blends.

Dairy products in cooking

For dairy products used in cooking, i.e. soups, stews and dressings, the fat content should be maximum 10 g of fat per 100 grammes. By using dairy products with maximum 10% fat the children will still benefit from the healthy nutrients, while the limiting the intake of unhealthy fats.

Fats

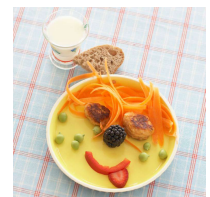
Fats include oil, vegetable margarines, butter, butter/margarine/oil blends, mayonnaise, remoulade, and similar. Fats are necessary, but not all fats are equally healthy. Healthy fats are found in oil, soft/pourable vegetable margarines, low-fat margarine, mayonnaise, remoulade, nuts, almonds, kernels, avocado and fish. Unhealthy fats are found especially in butter, butter/margarine/oil blends, hard margarines, coconut fat, dairy products and meat.

Very young children in particular need a little extra fat, but after one year of age they no longer need extra fat besides the fat in an ordinary balanced diet and semi-skimmed milk.

In daycare mainly healthy fats are used in cooking, which means that butter and butter/margarine/oil blends are limited as far as possible. Daycare mainly uses fresh cheese, mayonnaise, remoulade, mashed avocado and similar spreads under lean toppings and toppings that can slide off the bread. Butter and butter/margarine/oil products are sometimes offered at breakfast and snack time, for example on freshly-baked bread.

*“I don’t think they should force you to eat up.
That’s cruel.
If you can’t eat any more, you just can’t.”*

Rasmus



A HEALTHY, TASTY LUNCH

Lunch at daycare uses the plate model to measure the portions of individual foods. The plate model is a good guide when determining lunchtime portions of open sandwiches on rye bread, or hot dishes. According to the plate model, bread, potatoes, rice and/or pasta should fill 2/5 of the plate. Vegetables and any fruit offered should also fill 2/5 of the plate, while fish, meat, egg and/or cheese should fill the last 1/5 of the plate. Offering the children different foods according to this model ensures a balanced diet. The children also learn that a meal consists of different foods, and a variety of flavours, fragrances and consistencies. As cold and hot lunches have the same nutritional value, switching between the two makes it easier to offer a variety of foods.



SPECIAL DIETS

As far as possible, daycare meals are intended to be suitable for every child in the daycare group. However, some children may not be able to eat one or more ingredients on health grounds, and these ingredients have to be replaced with others. Children with allergies, for example, require a special diet. A special diet is served in daycare when prescribed in writing by a doctor or clinical dietician. As agreed with the parents, the daycare staff can buy special foods if they are locally available.

A MULTITUDE OF FOOD CULTURES

Daycare values diversity – also when it comes to food. Daycare is open to different healthy food cultures, and the inspiration they can give for everyday meals. If the children observe special dietary requirements on cultural or religious grounds, these requirements are respected.

ORGANIC FOOD

In daycare all cereal products, dairy products, and butter and margarine/butter/oil blends are mainly organic. Organic foods are produced without the use of chemicals and artificial fertilisers. If this is practically and financially possible, even more foods may be organic. “Mainly” means that if the food cannot be purchased in well-stocked supermarkets in the daycare staff’s neighbourhood, a non-organic product may be chosen instead.

Organic cereal products

Cereal products are foods in which cereals are a significant ingredient. The most common cereals are rye, oats, wheat and barley. Other cereals are rice, maize and millet.

Cereal products include:

- **Wholegrain**
Wholegrain cereals can be whole, cracked, cut, ground into wholegrain flour or lightly polished. Examples of wholegrain cereals are: rye flour, whole wheat flour, wholegrain wheat flour, cracked wheat germ, wholegrain spelt flour, pearl barley, pearled rye flour and pearled spelt flour.
- **Meal and flakes**
Meal and flakes are rolled wholegrain such as oatmeal and millet flakes
- **Flour without the grain's germs and bran**
This flour is, for example, wheat flour and mixed rye and wheat flour
- **Pastries and bread**
- **Pasta, rice, noodles, bulgur and couscous**
- **Breakfast cereals and müsli**

Organic dairy products

Dairy products are liquid products based on milk (in contrast to solid dairy products such as butter and cheese)

The most common dairy products are:

- **Milk** (skimmed, mini, semi-skimmed, full-fat and buttermilk)
- **Fermented dairy products** (including yoghurt, junket, ymer, A38, crème fraîche and fromage frais)
- **Cream**

Organic butter/blends

Butter is made from fermented cream

Blends (for example Kærgården) are a blend of butter and oil. The content of butter, oil and water can vary according to the type of blend.

WHAT THE CHILDREN SHOULD DRINK

Children should drink water or milk at mealtime. They are taught to drink water when they are thirsty – also on summer excursions.

The youngest children, who are given formula, are gradually taught to drink from a cup.

Dairy products before one year?

Before 6 months – Before the child is 6 months old the milk he or she drinks and that is used in food is breast milk and/or formula

6-9 months – Breast milk and formula is still an important part of the child's diet and accounts for most of the milk consumed by the child up to 9 months. From 6 months, the child can start to have a little full-fat milk in meals and small sips from a cup, as well as small quantities of full-fat fermented milk products.

At 9 months, the child's total milk consumption (breast milk, formula, full-fat milk and fermented milk products) is recommended to be a **maximum of ¾ of a litre per day**.

9-12 months – Full-fat milk and fermented milk products based on full-fat milk are gradually offered in larger quantities than before, and gradually account for most of the child's milk consumption. The total quantity of milk is reduced gradually, so that by 12 months it is **approximately ½ litre per day**.

1-3 years – As the child no longer needs so much fat it is recommended to offer the child semi-skimmed milk and fermented milk products based mainly on semi-skimmed milk. As ordinary food products are now a larger part of the child's diet, the total quantity of milk is recommended to be approximately ½ litre per day. This is a suitable quantity, but it does not have to be this exact, as long as the child does not have a large milk intake. Too much milk takes the place of other foods and can lead to iron deficiency, as milk does not contain very much iron. Too little milk is not a good thing either, but with **minimum 3½ dl per day** the child will benefit from the various nutrients found in milk.

Milk and quantities of milk in daycare

Up to 1 year, milk is offered as formula, full-fat milk and fermented milk products based on full-fat milk, such as A38, junket and yoghurt. To ensure that the child does not have an excessive intake of fat, formula and full-fat milk products are discontinued after the child reaches one.

Fermented milk products with a higher protein content than full-fat milk are not offered until after the child turns one.

Depending on the child's age and childcare needs, the individual child's need for milk and dairy products is adjusted in dialogue with the parents. As a rule of thumb, all children over one are offered **approximately 1¼ dl of semi-skimmed milk per day**.

SPECIAL DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN AGED UP TO ONE

Extra fat

In daycare the youngest children are offered homemade porridge and vegetable puree with a teaspoonful of oil, butter or blend added per portion. With milk, this is to ensure that the child gets enough fat. The child is given vegetable oil rather than butter and blend products in meals because this is healthiest. Until the child turns one a little extra fat should be added to both cold and hot food.

Gluten

Children under 6 months may not be given food containing gluten. Gluten is found in the cereal products wheat, barley, rye and oats. The gluten content of wheat is considerably higher than for the three other types of cereal. Cereal products without gluten are maize, millet, buckwheat and rice. When the child is 6 months he or she can gradually start to eat foods containing gluten. In daycare we start with oatmeal porridge from the age of 6 months as the gluten content is low, and we wait to offer wheat products until the child is able to chew the bread.

Vegetables containing nitrate

Children under 6 months must not be offered pureed spinach, beetroot, fennel and celeriac, as these vegetables have a high content of nitrate, which is harmful to children at this age. From 6 to 12 months they can be offered these vegetables, provided that they only account for 1/10 of the dish/puree. If these vegetables are offered in larger quantities they should only be served occasionally, for example at 14-day intervals.

Pulses

Pulses are beans, peas and lentils. They have a high content of protein, which the child needs, but only in small quantities. They should therefore only be offered in small quantities, starting from 6 months.

Meat, fish and eggs

Meat, fish and eggs are important sources of protein and many other nutrients. Due to their high protein content these foods should not be given to children aged under 6 months, however. After 6 months it is important that meat, fish and eggs are introduced in small quantities, as they contribute important nutrients with the other foods that the child now needs in addition to milk.

Honey

Children under one year may not be given honey. Honey can contain bacteria spores that are poisonous for children under one.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING FOODS AT 0-3 YEARS

Frozen berries

All frozen berries must always boil (bubble) for at least one minute before being used as dessert, and in smoothies, yoghurt, etc. The reason is the risk of infection. This recommendation does not apply to fresh berries.

Green topping

Parsley, chives and other fresh herbs, as well as leaf vegetables, are called green topping when chopped finely and used to decorate food.

Green topping on cold food

Infants and young children may have a green topping on cold food. Leftover cold food with green topping must always be discarded.

Green topping on hot food

Children may not use green topping on hot food due to the risk of nitrite from soil bacteria. Nitrite can lead to poisoning.

Fresh herbs and leaf vegetables in hot dishes.

Fresh herbs and leaf vegetables may be used in hot dishes as long as they (boil) bubble in the dish. Provided that they are refrigerated immediately these dishes may be re-heated by boiling or in the oven. The dish must reach a temperature over 75 degrees.

Peanuts, nuts and popcorn

In the City of Copenhagen's daycare service children under three years of age may not be given whole nuts, peanuts, popcorn and similar, due to the choking risk. Finely chopped or ground nuts, almonds and similar may be eaten.

Raisins

Children aged under three may eat a maximum of 50 g of raisins per week, equivalent to three small packs, as raisins have a potentially high content of the fungal poison ochratoxin A, which is carcinogenic. Raisins can be replaced by chopped apricots. (See dried fruit.)

Predatory fish

Until the child is three, the weekly intake of large predatory fish should not exceed 25 g, due to the mercury content. Large predatory fish include tuna (steaks), porbeagle shark, pike and swordfish. This recommendation does not apply to tinned tuna, as this comprises young, small tuna fish with a very low mercury content.

Salt

No salt should be added to food for young children. Use of salt should therefore be restricted. Please also note that processed foods such as cheese, toppings and sliced meats can contain a lot of salt and should be use cautiously.

Dried fruit

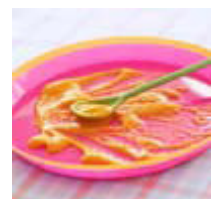
Dried fruit and fruit toppings are an alternative to sweets and sweetmeats, but cannot replace fresh fruit. The naturally high sugar content of dried fruit entails a high energy content, so that the intake of dried fruit and fruit toppings should be limited.

In daycare we therefore only use small quantities of dried fruit in cooking, as a topping once in a while, and on festive occasions.

Eggs

Due to the salmonella risk eggs must always be served hardboiled when offered as sandwich toppings. Omelettes must be cooked on both sides. Alternatively, pasteurised eggs can be used for these dishes, as well as scrambled eggs.

Ordinary eggs may be used in patés, mince-based dishes, cakes and pancakes.



HOW SWEET ARE THE CHILDREN?

Less sugar for the little ones

We use sugar in daycare, but only in small amounts. This might be in fruit purees, fruit compote, jam, bread, and on porridge. Sugar and other sweeteners such as cane sugar and honey can add the finishing touch to fruit puree, bread or porridge. However, the principle is that as far as possible we use other fruit as a sweetener. Fruit purees and jam based on berries can be sweetened with apple and pear as a replacement for sugar. A little sugar may be added at the end. Primarily finely chopped fresh fruit is used to sweeten porridge.

Artificial sweeteners are not used in daycare.

Sugar from fruit

Sweet fruit such as banana, melon, pear, grapes and pineapple have a natural content of fruit sugar (fructose).

In addition to fruit sugar, fruit contributes dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Fruit is therefore highly nutritional and an important part of a balanced diet.

Children, sugar and fat

A healthy balanced diet gives children all the nutrients they need to grow and to stay healthy. Sugar contains energy, but no vitamins or minerals. Sweets, ice cream, cakes, biscuits, crackers, chocolate, fizzy drinks and mineral water, squash and crisps are all examples of foods with a high content of sugar and/or fat. They mainly contribute a lot of energy and no, or very few, vitamins and minerals. In order to ensure sufficient intake of nutrients it is therefore important that young children aged between 0 and three have a balanced diet and are not offered foods containing a lot of sugar and fat. The producers of foods such as fruit yoghurt, chocolate milk, buttermilk desserts, garlic bread, fast-food, many ready meals and breakfast cereals rich in sugar also add a lot of sugar and/or fat, and it is also recommended that young children are not offered food of this type.

When children do not get enough exercise food with a high sugar and fat content will increase the risk of the children putting on too much weight. On the other hand, it is not enough to teach the children to get more exercise in order to prevent obesity. If children eat foods that contain too much fat and sugar there is no room in their stomachs for the healthy foods. This reduces their intake of sufficient vitamins and minerals, and the children's overall diet becomes deficient. A thin or normally built child therefore should not eat more sweet or fatty foods than other children.



HURRAH – IT’S PARTY TIME



The party brochure for daycare presents many ideas for party meals in daycare. In daycare the birthday child or the seasonal celebration are in focus. The children sing birthday songs, and listen to stories. The birthday may have a special theme chosen by the child and parents – a Red Indian party, winter picnic, conker game, and so on. A seasonal celebration may involve telling stories, making decorations, or a puppet theatre – all based on the season. Children and adults can bake Red Indian buns, make rye bread canapés, cut fruit into fun shapes, decorate dishes with fruit and berries, or bake fancy themed cakes decorated with candles and flags.

Get more inspiration in the folder “Party Time in Daycare” (in Danish) which presents some healthy recipes for party food.

*“I eat cheese with Ulla and Jette,
but at home I am like my dad,
and he does not eat cheese.”*

Mikkel



MEALS IN DAYCARE

ENJOYABLE MEALS

In daycare, meals are an important part of the day, for many reasons besides having something to eat. Small details matter, and for young children especially meals are an intense focal point. Children are born curious and learn by trying things out. Children are also often inspired to try something new when they share a meal with their friends and daycare staff.

Meals give rhythm to the day, as a good break from the day's activities, with time to eat and enjoy the meal.

Daycare does a lot to ensure a good atmosphere at mealtimes, so that everyone can enjoy the meal. A good atmosphere encourages the children to taste and try out new foods and enjoy sampling different ingredients. The children also enjoy the fellowship and the close contact around the table.

Clear and simple

As a general rule, children like to see what is being served, so they can more easily choose what they would like to eat. It can therefore be a good idea to serve the meal so that each component is presented separately – meat, potatoes, pasta, rice, vegetables – preferably in pieces, chunks, sticks and slices that are easy to dish up.

Children often like to “pick and mix” their lunch and afternoon snack. “Pick and mix” food can, for example, be rye bread sticks or small boiled potatoes, small tuna balls, soft chicken chunks, boiled broccoli florets, cherry tomatoes, and small melon squares. This “pick and mix” food can be served in small bowls and dishes that the children can pass round, so they can take what they like. Another idea is a platter with a selection of different foods for each child. This gives the daycare staff a better idea of what the child prefers to eat.

RESPECT FOR THE CHILD'S PREFERENCES AND APPETITE

Daycare staff respect that children have different preferences and appetites. Children know when they have had enough to eat, and what they like. So they can decide for themselves what – and how much – they would like to eat when food is served. Some children are fast eaters, while some take their time. In daycare children are allowed to eat at their own pace.

New things take time!

Very few children are fussy eaters, although most have a natural scepticism towards new food. This means that new foods should be offered many times, where it may take ten attempts before the child will eat them with enjoyment. Daycare staff make sure that the children have the time to get used to new things, and respect that they may prefer some foods to others. When many different meals are served during the day this helps to ensure that the child has a balanced diet.

FOOD AND DIALOGUE WITH PARENTS

Food and meals are a natural part of the day-to-day dialogue and contact between parents and daycare staff. This dialogue helps to ensure that there is continuity in the child's life between daycare and the home.

Many parents would like to know what the child has had to eat in the course of the day. This can give them an idea of how the day has been in general. Food is also a good starting point for a sound dialogue on how the child is developing and thriving, for example if the child has learnt how to use a fork, peel a potato, or make an entertaining comment at table.

MEALS ARE A UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Daycare regards mealtimes as a good opportunity for learning. The six themes of the pedagogical curriculum are covered during mealtimes, so focus on learning in this situation will teach the children some vital skills.

Personal development

The meal activates personal needs, preferences and antipathies. "Let me do it" expresses the child's wish to decide for himself, and to speak up for herself. This is often clearly apparent in the child's attitude to food and eating, where the daycare staff support the child's preferences by letting the child decide as much as possible for him- or herself. The child is given the opportunity to examine the food with all the senses and to practice at his or her own speed. This strengthens the child's self-esteem and stimulates the child to do things for her or himself.

Social development

When children help to prepare food and eat together as a group they also learn a number of social skills. An example is when they pass round small dishes, share things, wait for their turn, or help each other to set the table and clear away.

Linguistic development

During the meal there is ample opportunity to talk to the children about the food. The children learn the right words for the different foods, as well as concepts such as hot, cold, sour, sweet, mild, strong, on top of and next to.

Body and movement

Learning how to eat and how to pour drinks requires good eye-to-hand coordination, and a willingness to try out all the fine small movements necessary to handle a glass and cutlery. Children's senses are stimulated in many ways during a meal. The sight of different colours and shapes attracts the eye, the experience of touching and biting hard, rough, smooth and soft things appeals to the sense of touch, and the taste of different foods stimulates the taste buds and the sense of smell.

Modes of cultural expression

Daycare staff eat with the children, and the children learn by copying the adults. By sitting down and eating together everyone feels included in the fellowship. It is therefore vital that adults set a good example by tasting the food and expressing curiosity, enjoyment and enthusiasm, which exerts a positive influence on the children. A meal includes many rituals, giving the children a sound basis to learn how to behave at mealtimes and have good table manners.

Nature and natural phenomena

When daycare staff are asked where food comes from this is a good opportunity to describe the food chain from land to table. In our time, it can be hard to see and know where food comes from. Most of us live in urban communities without any contact with places where livestock is bred and vegetables are grown. Food can be varied with the seasons. For example, we eat beetroot in winter, and the best Danish strawberries in the summer. This marks the seasons with traditions that children and adults can look forward to “tasting”.

DAYCARE’S KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTHY FOOD AND MEALS

The courses and other programmes offered to daycare staff include a number of activities to provide information on young children’s nutrition. Daycare staff are offered:

- Courses and theme days on meals for young children and balanced, enjoyable meals.
- Guidance, knowledge and inspiration from the daycare teacher
- Contact with health visitors on food and nutrition
- Ongoing projects based on food as a special topic, e.g. food workshops
- Books and leaflets on food for young children.

*“Eggs come from hens. There are chicks inside the eggs,
and sometimes they are taken out and the eggs are glued together again.”
Emil*



HYGIENE IN DAYCARE

Daycare adheres to the good hygiene guidelines in terms of foods, hand hygiene and cleaning. Here are the most important guidelines:

Food hygiene

- Separate chopping boards are used for meat and vegetables
- Raw food is kept separate from other food – either raw or prepared
- Raw and prepared food (ready to be served) that is refrigerated, even for a short time, is stored separately in containers that are covered or filmed
- Hot food is heated to minimum 75 degrees Celsius
- Must boil and bubble
- Leftover hot food must be covered and refrigerated as soon as it has cooled off
- Food shopping must be refrigerated as soon as it is brought home

Cleaning

- Dishcloths must be changed daily
- Wet dishcloths and teatowels must be hung so they can dry quickly
- Worktops and implements are kept clean
- Feeding bottles are cleaned after every meal
- Bottles are washed in washing-up liquid using a bottle brush, and the detergent is rinsed off. Teats are rubbed with salt. Finally, the bottle, teat and lid are scalded in boiling water. Bottles and lids – but not teats – may be washed in a dishwasher
- Dummies are scalded in boiling water regularly

Hand hygiene

- Hands must be washed with soap under running water for 30 seconds after using the lavatory, before cooking, before and after handling different raw foods, and before eating
- Towels must be replaced daily
- Rings and other hand jewellery must be removed before working with food
- Nails of both children and adults must be kept short
- Hand soap must be kept dry, or liquid soap in a non-recyclable container may be used

Cooking with children

When children help to cook they learn in daycare that they should:

- Wash their hands thoroughly before and after cooking and always after visits to the lavatory
- Keep raw and prepared foods separate
- Avoid tasting ingredients such as raw meat, mince and cake mix containing raw egg

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

***Mad til spædbørn & småbørn - fra skemad til familiemad* (Food for infants and young children – from spooned food to family meals) (in Danish)**

The Danish National Board of Health and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, 11th edition, 2010

The book reviews the child's diet from 0 to three years on the basis of the official recommendations of the Danish National Board of Health and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration – with recipes, good advice and a mini-lexicon.

Can be purchased at pharmacies, or from the Danish Committee for Health Education, telephone (+45) 35265400, www.sundkom.dk. Can be read on the Danish National Board of Health's website www.sst.dk

Diet Compass

The eight official dietary recommendations are set out in a Diet Compass prepared by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration in cooperation with the Exercise and Nutrition Council (now discontinued), the National Food Institute, the National Board of Health, Suhrs Seminarium, the Danish Heart Foundation, the Danish Cancer Society, and Coop Denmark. More information on the eight official dietary recommendations is available on the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration's website on food, meals and exercise: www.altomkost.dk

***Det fælles Frokostmåltid – anbefalinger og inspiration til sund mad til børn i daginstitutionen* (At the Lunch Table – recommendations and inspiration for healthy food for children in childcare institutions) (in Danish), the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, 2009**

This publication can be purchased from the Danish Committee for Health Education, telephone (+45) 35265400, www.sundkom.dk and can be read on the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration's website: www.altomkost.dk

***Spis, leg og ha' det godt* (Live, play and eat well) (in Danish)
The Danish Committee for Health Education 2008**

This publication can be purchased from the Danish Committee for Health Education, telephone (+45) 35265400, www.sundkom.dk

PUBLIC WEBSITES ON FOOD, ETC.

www.altomkost.dk

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration's website on food, meals and exercise

www.fvst.dk

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration's website

www.foedevareallergi.dk

The joint website on food allergies of the Danish National Board of Health, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, and the Danish Asthma and Allergy Association

www.sst.dk

The Danish National Board of Health's website

www.forbrugerraadet.dk

The Danish Consumer Council's website.

The Danish Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation that promotes all consumers' interests in relation to the business community and public authorities

www.miljoeogsundhed.dk

Website of the Information Centre for Environment and Health (IMS). IMS is the consumers' independent information centre on environment, health and consumption. It is financed from public funding granted via the Danish Ministry of the Environment.

www.kk.dk/daglejen

This website presents the Daycare Service's daycare nutrition and meals policy in the City of Copenhagen.

