09 Early years practice procedures

**09.7 Prime times – Baby and toddler mealtimes**

Feeding and mealtimes are key times in the day for being close and to promote security, as well as for exploration and learning. We understand the importance of a healthy balanced diet for young children.

**Toddler mealtimes**

* For the most part, older babies and toddlers who are feeding themselves have their meals in their space, with their key group and key person.
* Staff who are eating with the children must role-model hygiene, healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
* Staff arrange the table before toddlers sit down; there should be no waiting time.
* Babies’ and toddlers’ hands are wiped/washed clean before their meal.
* Babies and toddlers are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults’ tasks and breaks.
* Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction of babies and toddlers with their group and the adults who care for them. It is a time of sensory learning and learning skills, as well as for the fundamental satisfaction of being fed.
* In order to protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swopping their food with one another.
* 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>