09 Early years practice procedures

**09.8 Prime times – Snack-times and mealtimes (older children)**

Children are supervised during mealtimes and always remain within sight and hearing of staff.

**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. Preference given to sitting at a table.
* Children may also take turns to help set the table. Small, lidded plastic jugs are provided with choice of milk or water.
* Children wash their hands before and after snack-time.
* Children are only offered semi skimmed milk.
* 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.
* Portion sizes are gauged as appropriate to the age of the child.
* Biscuits should not be offered, but toast, rice cakes or oatcakes are good alternatives.
* Children all sit together at a regular time each session and leave when they have had enough
* Staff join in conversation and encourage children’s independence by allowing them to pour drinks, butter toast, cut fruit etc.

**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.
* Children wash their hands and sit down.
* Staff have their lunch with children and do not eat different food in front of children. Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice at all times, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
* 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.
* 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. Children may be invited to the babies’ room for lunch, to join a sibling or be with their previous carer if they have just moved up into the older group. There should also be opportunities for babies and toddlers to join the older children for lunch, providing they do not find this unsettling or distressing.
* Children go to the bathroom and wash their hands after lunch generally in their key groups
* Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf>