



NUTRITION FACT SHEET #1

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO ENJOY HEALTHY FOOD

Healthy food and drinks give children all the nutrients they need to: grow and develop; concentrate and learn; fight infections; stay healthy, alert and energetic so they can be active participants in play. OSHC services provide many opportunities for children to enjoy healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children. Involving children in planning, preparing and serving food as well as creating a positive, relaxed and enjoyable meal time can encourage children to eat well.

STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING

- Involve children in planning the service menu. Turn it into an activity - get out the recipe books and magazines and create a great opportunity for educators to scaffold children's learning through conversations about food choices and healthy eating.
- Involve children in food preparation routines. Provide opportunities to enhance children's life skills through encouraging them to be involved in the preparation of breakfast and/or afternoon tea. Whether it be buttering their own toast at breakfast or helping to make the sandwiches for afternoon tea, children get great satisfaction when eating something they have helped to prepare, regardless of how minor their input may have been.
- Vary the taste, colour and texture of foods provided. Offering a variety of fresh (where possible) or alternatively frozen, dried or canned vegetables and fruits or different types of breads and cheeses. This will help children explore different tastes and assist in the development of preferences for healthy foods.
- Serve food in interesting ways: make fruit kebab sticks as an activity or cut fruit and vegetables into shapes; create pinwheels by cutting salad pita bread roll ups into slices; serve savoury mince on a pappadum; or blend up some fruit for a refreshing smoothie drink.
- Have a fruit or vegetable of the week. Discuss how and where it grows and allow the children to taste it. Collaborate with the children and find recipes for the children to make using that fruit or vegetable.
- Games using food encourages discussion about different foods and can extend on children's learning on how we grow, make and buy foods. Make a food alphabet, finding as many foods as possible for each letter. Play the game "I am thinking of a food which begins with the letter.....". Describe the colour, texture, appearance and shape until someone can guess the answer.
- Talk with the children about where different foods come from (e.g. the bakery, dairy, fruit and vegetable section). Extend the children's learning by organising an excursion to a farm, orchard or bakery.
- Dramatic play in a shop or home corner can provide a setting for learning the words and concepts associated with buying, selling, cooking and eating foods. Make a shop or kitchen area with boxes and use clean empty packages to stock the shelves. Try to select a range of food packages from all the food groups.