Healthy Lunch Policy

We recognise that we have a corporate responsibility and duty of care for children and adults associated with Phoenix Early Learners. Risk assessment is the key means through which this is achieved.

- Parents/carers share information about their children's particular dietary needs with us when they enrol their children and on an on-going basis. This information is shared with all who are involved in the care of the child.
- Foods provided by PEL for children have are checked for allergenic ingredients before serving.
- Care is taken to ensure that children with food allergies and intolerances do not have contact with food products that they are allergic to.
- Risk assessments are conducted for each individual child who has a food allergy or specific dietary requirement.

At each mealtime and snack time a member of staff is responsible for checking that the food being served to each child meets all their dietary requirements and is prepared in a way to prevent choking.

Staff ensure that children:

- wash their hands with soap and rinse under warm running water before eating meals or snacks and after going to the toilet;
- do not eat food that has fallen on the floor

To help meet sustainability targets all food waste is recycled, fresh vegetable and fruit waste is put in our compost bin and plastic containers such as yoghurt pots are recycled.

Packed lunches

Packed lunches should include these items every day:

• Energy food – choose wholegrain varieties like bread, pasta, couscous, rice, chapattis and wraps.

• Protein food - like meat, fish, dairy, eggs, lentils and beans.

• At least 1 or more portions of vegetables.

• 1 portion of fruit.

• A dairy food – like milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard or calcium-enriched plant-based dairy alternative.

• A drink of water, milk or fruit juice.

Packed lunches can occasionally include (approx. once per week)

• Meat based food items like sausage rolls and pies.

• Cakes and biscuits.

Packed lunches should not include

• Items such nuts and sesame.

• Snacks high in salt like crisps – vegetable sticks, seeds, savoury crackers or breadsticks, popcorn.

• Confectionery like sweets, chocolate bars – instead include fruit, flapjack.

• Soft drinks – fizzy drinks, squash (those labelled no-added sugar or sugar free contain harmful sweeteners and encourage a taste for sweet food and drinks).

Choking

Children can choke at any age. However, younger children are at greater risk as their narrow airways are more easily blocked.

Babies' and young children's immune systems are not as strong and developed as adults'. This means they are more vulnerable to infections which can lead to food poisoning. It is important to take extra care with hygiene and preparing food safely.

How to reduce the risk of choking

Children can choke on any food. To minimise the risk of choking:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods (like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes) lengthways and into quarters

- cut large fruits (like melon) and hard fruit or vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) into slices instead of small chunks
- do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months (they can be chopped up as part of a meal)
- cut sausages into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins (sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content)
- remove bones from meat or fish
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
- consider wholemeal or toasted bread as white bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, and cut all types of bread into strips for very young children
- do not give whole nuts to children under five years old
- do not give whole seeds to children under five years old
- do not give children popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet, either to eat or as part of messy play activities, as they can get stuck in the throat
- do not give children hard sweets

When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention from a member of staff, such as back pats, the details of the incident will be recorded and parents and carers will be informed. This is to help spot any trends with the types of food that might be causing choking incidents.

Foods to avoid up to 5 years

Children under the age of 5 should not be given:

- whole nuts and peanuts as they pose a choking risk (children can be given crushed or ground nuts and smooth peanut butter from around 6 months old) and in preschool are an allergen risk.
- raw eggs, runny boiled eggs or foods containing partially cooked eggs like uncooked cake mixture (unless they have the red lion stamp or you see the words “British Lion quality”)

- foods high in salt such as sausages, bacon, crackers, crisps
- sugar, either in sugary snacks or added to food
- foods high in saturated fat such as biscuits, crisps and cakes
- fresh pate (meat, fish or vegetable-based) to reduce the risk of food poisoning
- unpasteurised milk, milk drinks and cheese, mould-ripened cheeses and soft blue-veined cheese, to reduce the risk of food poisoning (these cheeses can be used as part of a cooked recipe as listeria is killed by cooking)
- shark, swordfish and marlin, as the levels of mercury in these fish can affect a child's developing nervous system
- raw shellfish, to reduce the risk of food poisoning - make sure any shellfish you use is thoroughly cooked.
- raw jelly cubes, as these are a choking hazard

Useful resources

Children's food: safety and hygiene - NHS

Food allergy - NHS

Anaphylaxis - NHS