

Footsteps Child Care: Wellness Policy

BACKGROUND

Our mission is to provide infants, children, and their families with quality programs in a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment. One of our goals is to create an environment ensuring the optimal health of your children and of our staff.

Child Care programs, such as Footsteps Child Care, are uniquely positioned to contribute to improving the nutritional health and physical activity of children and adolescents. Footsteps Child Care is an important venue to improve health behaviors and outcomes for many reasons:

- Our programs occur during a time of day when many children are likely to be sedentary if not given active options.
- Children are at a developmental stage when they are forming health habits they will carry into adulthood. Promoting healthy behaviors in after school programs can have benefits for a lifetime.
- Our sites offer a supportive, safe environment in which children can feel comfortable trying new activities and building skills.
- Our staff is caring, knowledgeable, and well trained – they serve as role models that positively influence children’s health and nutrition choices.¹

Footsteps Child Care must also ensure the wellness of our staff. Like many Americans, our staff spends much of their waking hours at work. Therefore, creating a healthy environment for our employees is an important way to improve their health.

In order to ensure that we maximize the benefits of our programs, we have created a Wellness Policy to guide our efforts to create a healthy environment for youth, their families, and our staff. It includes guidelines regarding nutrition, physical activity, and promotion of healthy behaviors for your children while they are at Footsteps Child Care, as well as guidelines for the food and physical activity environments for staff at our sites. Using these guidelines, we seek to ensure that all youth and staff have access to:

- Healthy foods and beverages;
- Regular, fun, and inclusive physical activity (or, for staff the flexibility to get activity on their own);
- Appropriate and understandable health information; and
- Positive, healthy role models.

We recognize that healthy eating and physical activity are not all or nothing decisions —they are about balancing choices. Our goal is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

¹ Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Nutrition in Afterschool Settings: Strategies for Program Leaders and Policy Makers. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: August, 2006.

NUTRITION GUIDELINES

These guidelines are meant to inform food and beverage selection for all program-related activities, including snacks, beverages, and meals provided to children and youth, as well as food and drinks served at events.

CHILD AND YOUTH NUTRITION GUIDELINES

These guidelines cover regular snacks and meals served to youth at Footsteps Child Care. Monthly birthday celebrations are excluded from strictly following these guidelines. Likewise, food served or purchased by youth off-site may not meet the criteria. We aim to implement fully the guidelines over the next 12 months. Staff at each site will be responsible for implementation, with periodic checks by the Executive Director.

Food Served to Children and Youth at Footsteps Child Care. Food items served to children and youth at Footsteps will meet the following criteria:

For infants under 1 year:

For infants under 6 months only breast milk or formula should be ingested. No other food or liquid should be provided included water.

Amounts of foods to offer

Age	Texture	Frequency	Amount at each meal
6–8 months	Start with thick porridge, well mashed foods Continue with mashed family foods	2–3 meals per day, plus frequent breastfeeds Depending on the child's appetite, 1–2 snacks may be offered	Start with 2–3 tablespoonfuls per feed, increasing gradually to ½ of a 250 ml cup
9–11 months	Finely chopped or mashed foods, and foods that baby can pick up	3–4 meals per day, plus breastfeeds Depending on the child's appetite, 1–2 snacks may be offered	½ of a 250 ml cup/bowl
12–23 months	Family foods, chopped or mashed if necessary	3–4 meals per day, plus breastfeeds Depending on the child's appetite, 1–2 snacks may be offered	¾ to full 250 ml cup/bowl

^a Note: If baby is not breastfed, give in addition: 1–2 cups of milk per day, and 1–2 extra meals per day.

<http://www.who.int/features/qa/21/en/index.html>

- We encourage breastfeeding. Mothers may express milk into bottles to be served to their infants while they are at Footsteps Child Care. For babies not breastfeeding, formula will be served following manufacturers' instructions.^{2,3}

² <http://www.brightfutures.org/nutritionfamfact/pdf/ColorEng/INB5color.pdf>

³ <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/feeding/feed13m.html#>

- For infants who have begun to eat solid foods, we aim to introduce a wide variety of soft, safe foods, including fruits and vegetables and lean meats, as appropriate. We aim to offer new foods one at a time to check for allergic reactions.⁴
- Avoid serving cow's milk, as it is not recommended for children under 1 year of age.⁵

For young children 1 to 2 years old:

- Provide a variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy products (including whole milk), and lean meats.
- Fat content will not be restricted, as very young children need additional calories from fat to ensure growth and development.⁶

For children 2 years of older:

- For children aged 2-3, no more than 30-40% of total calories are from fat; for children aged 4 and above, no more than 25-35% of total calories are from fat.
- For children aged 2 and above, food items will have no more than 10% of total calories from saturated fat.
- For children aged 2 and above, food will contain no trans-fat.⁷
- For children aged 2 and above, no more than 35% of calories are from total sugars, with the following exceptions:
 - Yogurt and milk with less than 25g of sugar per 8oz serving.⁸
- For children aged 2 and above, snacks should have 200mg of sodium or less and entrées/meals should have 480mg of sodium or less per serving.⁹

In general, we will aim to:

- Offer appropriate portion sizes and regular meal/snack times to prevent both hunger and over-eating. Toddler portion sizes are about one-quarter of adult serving sizes
 - For children 4-8, portion sizes should be about one-third of adult serving sizes.
 - For children 9 years and old, portion sizes about the same size as for adults¹⁰
- Focus on whole grains (ensure ≥ 50% of grains served are whole grains).
- Emphasize colorful and varied produce. Include at least one serving of fruits or vegetables at each snack (can be fresh, frozen, canned or dried; ensure no items with added sugar). Vary produce offered to maximize nutrient diversity. At meal times, about half of plate should be produce, following USDA's "My Plate" initiative¹¹. Whenever possible, purchase produce that is grown locally.
- Vary food items and meals served, and encourage youth to try different foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
- Focus on lean proteins such as egg whites, poultry, fish, and soy products.
- Select healthy fats (mono- and poly-unsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids) over unhealthy fats (saturated fats).
- Avoid foods that are deep fried, par fried, or flash fried.
- Minimize sweet baked goods (cookies, cake, etc.) served. Any sweets that are served will be trans-fat-free.

⁴ <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/feeding/feed47m.html#>

⁵ <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002448.htm>

⁶ Kliegman RM, Behrman RE, Jenson HB, Stanton BF, eds. *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics*. 18th ed. Philadelphia, Pa: Saunders Elsevier; 2007:chap 42.

See <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002455.htm>

⁷ For total fat, saturated fats, and trans-fat recommendations, see

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/Chapter3.pdf> pages 24-26.

⁸ See http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/nutrition/pdf/nutrition_factsheet_schools.pdf Standard 2 (page 4).

⁹ See <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/Chapter3.pdf> page 23 and

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/nutrition/pdf/nutrition_factsheet_schools.pdf Standard 4 (page 4).

¹⁰ See http://pediatrics.about.com/od/nutrition/a/0508_food_prtns.htm for more information about appropriate portion sizes for children.

¹¹ See <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/> for more information on this initiative.

- Accommodate dietary restrictions due to allergies, religion, or culture.
- Encourage students to participate in selecting, preparing, and cleaning-up food, as appropriate.



MyPlate is part of a larger communications initiative based on 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans to help consumers make better food choices. The guidelines recommend making about half of your plate fruits and vegetables.

Beverages Served to Children and Youth at Footsteps.

For infants and children less than 2 years of age:

- We encourage breastfeeding for infants less than 1 year old; those not breastfeeding will be served formula following manufacturers' instructions (see above).
- Children 12 months to 2 years will be served water and whole milk.

For children aged 2 year and above, we will:

- Offer healthy beverages, including low- or non-fat milk, and non-carbonated water.
- Always have water easily available at no cost to children and youth. Serve water in bulk (e.g. in a pitcher) during snack and meal times.
- Serve only 1% or fat-free milk. Limit milk consumption to 12-24 oz per day.
- Never serve beverages that contain caffeine or non-nutritive sweeteners.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH

To ensure that children and youth meet national recommendations for daily physical activity, we will:

- Dedicate at least 20% or at least 30 minutes of morning and after-school program time to physical activity (60 minutes for a full day program).
- Ensure that daily physical activity time includes age-appropriate aerobic, muscle- and bone strengthening activities.¹²
- Provide physical activities in which students engage in moderate to vigorous aerobic activity for at least 50% of the physical activity time.
- Provide activities that help children strengthen muscles, such as push-ups, sit-ups, or climbing on play structures.
- Include a variety of physical activity options that are fun, promote learning and skill building, and are accessible and enjoyable to students of all abilities. Ensure that activities are inclusive.
- Provide short physical activity breaks between and/or within learning or sedentary activities to invigorate children and eliminate long periods of sitting, and to incorporate physical activity into transition time.

¹² See <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/children.html> for examples of age-appropriate activities.

- Select field trips and off-site events that promote physical activity and introduce youth to new ways to stay active.
- Encourage students to participate in selecting, organizing, and leading activities, as appropriate.

In addition, we seek to reduce the amount of time youth are sedentary. We will:

- Limit time spent watching television or movies, playing video games and digital devices' (computer, etc.) to less than one hour per day to allow for other activities. Exceptions include video games that incorporate moderate to vigorous physical activity (e.g. Dance-Dance-Revolution) and use of computers and other devices for schoolwork.

PARENT EDUCATION NIGHT

Footsteps Child Care will offer a health education workshop for parents. Child care will be provided free of charge. In addition, parents who attend may receive an incentive for attending.

Topics may address nutrition, fitness (e.g. activities, muscle strengthening, flexibility), stress reduction, weight loss/management, tips for ways to incorporate physical activity into busy schedules), youth focused health topics (e.g. nutrition and physical activity for youth, social/emotional development, skills to increase healthy behaviors in youth), and/or healthy cooking.