



A nutrition newsletter for carers of children under five

ISSUE 12

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Family insert included to copy and distribute.

Autumn 2003



## Talking with families about nutrition

By Jenny Brozel, Project Officer, Gowrie Adelaide

Jenny Brozel from Lady Gowrie Child Centre is the project officer for the Talking with Families About Nutrition Project. Here she shares with us the importance of talking with parents and making child care centres a place where communication can help children form healthy eating habits.

### Sharing information about food and eating with families.

The foods children are eating and how much food is eaten are common concerns for parents. Staff in children's services are well placed to work through these challenges with parents by offering factual information, encouragement and support. That doesn't mean we need to have all the

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## For more information

For enquiries about any aspect of Food Matters, including mailing list details phone (08) 8161 7777.

For general information about children's health and nutrition, contact the Women's & Children's Hospital Health Information Centre, phone (08) 8161 6875.

## Welcome

to issue 12 of Food Matters. In this edition we discuss the importance of talking with families about nutrition. The early childhood years are a crucial time for learning good eating habits that will last a lifetime, and for many children early childhood settings is where it all starts. Talking to families about their children's food and eating habits is important to make sure that parents know about their children's eating patterns whilst in care. It can also ensure that children get consistent messages about food and eating from staff and parents. The Director of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Child Care Centre discusses how to overcome communication challenges with parents. We also provide information about the recently launched Nutrition Checklist for long day care centres and how it compliments the Start Right Eat Right program. We hope you enjoy reading this Autumn edition of Food Matters.

Rebecca Haigh  
Editor and Nutritionist  
Women's and Children's Hospital



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answers. Being ready to listen and knowing about agencies for referral can be the beginning of new opportunities for families.

### **Building relationships with families**

In children's services we are in an ideal environment to build trusting relationships with families.

Generally people are comfortable about going to a child care centre, preschool or Family Day Care care provider once they have chosen a service that meets their expectations. Families trust us with their children to nurture them, care for them and provide opportunities for learning. One of the best ways to facilitate mutual trust and respect is regular chatting with parents.

### **Creating opportunities for communication**

This can require some planning and flexible thinking! Find out from the parents the ideal time to catch up with them. For example, a quiet time at work or home to chat over the telephone. Give parents enough notice in order to rearrange their commitments.

Remember to find times that are going to work for everyone. Find out if the children travel to the service by public transport. If so, you could travel home with the children. This provides an opportunity to talk with parents when the children arrive at home. They will probably want some notice that you are coming. Make special times to invite parents to the centre to see what the children do. Provide a picnic, a supper, a morning tea or afternoon tea. Food is a great way to bring people together and a good opportunity to model healthy food choices.

### **Sharing nutrition information with families**

Different families look for different information. We all learn in different ways - some want short pieces of information, some want diagrams or pictures with key words near by. Often it is a combination of strategies that is most useful in sharing information with the range of families using the service.

#### **Some ideas**

Get to know your parents and find out the strategies that will work for them. Often people want to get the right information in a short space of time.

- Using enlarged photographs or posters with captions is effective. Parents love looking at photos of their own children.
- Have a computer in the foyer with about 25 digital photos running to create discussion between children and families about the child's day. Sets of photos taken in sequence provide their own story without words. Sometimes pictures and images help to change behaviour.

Creating the interest with parents is also important. Again, having some knowledge of family values and parent's ideals for their child will give us clues to what is important for families. Using these to make information relevant for families will increase the chance of it being heard.

- Pamphlets are often best used as discussion starters with key points highlighted for parents. Remember to follow up a short time after the discussion to see whether the information has been useful for the family. This also gives another opportunity to support the family and strengthen the relationship between parents and staff.

Sometimes getting the correct information can make all the difference.

### **Addressing food issues**

When issues arise about children's eating, this may be the occasion to make a formal time to talk through the issue with staff and parents. Through regular contact with parents, you will have gained some insight into what is important for each parent, how they see their child progressing at the centre and some interests of the parent. This information can be used as discussion starters or to tell us which types of written information each parent prefers.

We all have differing values about food and eating. Before discussing a food issue with parents, it is worthwhile to spend some time reflecting on values in relation to the issue to ensure objectivity.

The following are some guidelines to use when exploring food issues with families:

- Approach the family and find a time to get together.
- Choose a space that is free from distractions but is near where the child can continue to play with others.
- Be ready to listen and show that you respect other people's views and issues.
- Be understanding and offer support where possible.



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- Share some observations with the family that highlight the child's interests, interactions and achievements at the centre and reflects the importance of the family.
- Express your concerns. Share ways that the centre is already catering for the child's eating. How does the family feel about these strategies? Are they meeting the needs of their child? Is food and eating the real issue or are there other considerations such as the child's behaviour?
- Affirm the parenting role and the priorities of parents. It may or may not be an issue they want to discuss at this stage.
- Respect their decision but continue to observe the child and discuss with other team members.
- If you continue to be concerned, approach the family again.

### Role modelling

Are we providing the best role model for children when it comes to eating? There is no doubt that encouraging all of us to provide healthy food choices for children is an ongoing focus and it is important that the children see us enjoying healthy food as well.

### Creating a comfortable environment

As staff in children's services we have a key focus in creating an environment where parents and staff feel comfortable to share a child's achievements, discuss concerns, share information about the child's development and be supportive and encouraging of each others role in the child's life.



## Time for talking is important to TQEH staff!

Food Matters spoke with the Director of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital CCC, Julie Bragg, about overcoming the challenges in communicating with parents.

**FM:** *Why is it important for CCC to talk with parents?*

**Julie:** It is helpful to develop a relationship with child and family to provide information about the child's time at the centre and develop a picture of the child's routines, health and wellbeing.

**FM:** *What are some of the challenges for CCC in talking with parents?*

**Julie:** Time constraints!! There can be limited opportunities for staff and parents to catch up in a relaxed manner and share information relevant to the child whilst also keeping information private.

Other things that need to be considered are differing values and beliefs that surround the subject of food and child rearing practices. Also, parents sometimes refuse to believe that an issue exists.

**FM:** *How do you overcome these challenges?*

**Julie:** It is helpful to start with developing policies that are based on up to date information in regards to nutritional requirements for 0-5 years age group. The policy needs to respect different values and beliefs and is best done in consultation with parents, staff, children and cook.

Developing positive relationships with the child and family provides an opportunity to learn new information and new ways of looking at issues. Working through each issue as it arises and negotiating alternatives in a positive and constructive manner helps to manage any issues. Linking in with primary health care services, like your local community health service can help solve more difficult issues.

Communication can be assisted by encouraging staff to follow up with the parents and guardians each day. Communication can be improved through using observation books, verbal communication, notes, posters, brochures, books and articles through the newsletter and parent library. Displaying the centre's menu can also help. Making posters with the children to display in the kitchen area for conversation starters can also be useful. Formal interviews at least twice a year can also provide a more structured opportunity to talk with parents and guardians.



**FM:** *Well done TQEH for your great work in encouraging open communication with parents and guardians! Thank you for sharing your ideas with Food Matters readers.*



# How the Nutrition Checklist resource fits in with “Start Right – Eat Right Child Care Nutrition Award Scheme”

Some of you may have heard of Start Right – Eat Right (SRER) Child Care Nutrition Award Scheme and may be wondering how SRER fits in with the Planning Nutritious Long Day Care Menus: Nutrition Checklist & Support Materials resource (Nutrition Checklist), or vice versa.

## What is SRER?

SRER is an award scheme for childcare centres that provide:

- a nutritionally adequate menu (that meets at least 50% of a child’s Recommended Daily Intake),
- good food hygiene practices, and
- a supportive and enjoyable eating environment for children.

The award involves food safety training for all staff, and a 1½ day accredited nutrition training course to be attended by the centre director and cook. SRER has been piloted in some SA childcare centres and will now be available to *all SA childcare centres* by mid 2003.

## How does the Nutrition Checklist resource fit in with the SRER nutrition training?

The Nutrition Checklist resource is used in the SRER nutrition training course as part of the menu assessment process. It is the first step in getting an overview of whether the menu provides the recommended frequency and type of various foods and drinks on a daily or fortnightly basis. The SRER training then uses another resource called “SRER Menu Assessment and Planning Guide”, which is a

workbook that provides a systematic process to actually calculate that your menu does in fact provide the recommended minimum amounts (ie 50%) of food per child per day over the fortnight of menu being assessed (as well as the type and frequency of food). (NB it does not involve measuring how much children eat, only how much is provided!).

## If I have used the Nutrition Checklist resource, should I still do SRER?

SRER is a voluntary award. If you have used the nutrition checklist resource on your menu, you are well on the way to a nutritious menu that meets SRER award criteria. SRER award training also includes nutrition policy and food hygiene. The benefits of participating in the SRER award include:

- Knowing your centre is a leader in the field in terms of excellence in childcare nutrition and food safety practice for children in your care.
- Reassurance that your menu provides 50% of a child’s daily nutrition needs (in terms of the right frequency, type and amount of food), as well as good food hygiene and a supportive eating environment for children in care via an award (SRER certificate and sticker).
- Public acknowledgement that your centre has the SRER award via a newspaper ad twice yearly in “The Advertiser” listing all SRER award centres. Along with the award certificate and sticker, SRER can be a positive nutrition marketing tool for centres.

## When can I enrol for the SRER Award Scheme?

It is anticipated SRER award scheme training will be available to all SA child care centres as of mid 2003. (SRER was piloted in some SA childcare centres during 2001-early 2003). All centres will receive further information closer to this time.

The SRER scheme is funded by DHS and its partners are DHS, Noarlunga Health Service and the Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

For further information, contact: Julie-Anne McWhinnie, Start Right-Eat Right Project Officer Community Dietitian-Nutritionist (Noarlunga Health Services)

Phone: (08) 8325 8100

Fax: (08) 8325 8199

Email:

JulieAnne.McWhinnie@dhs.sa.gov.au



The SA Child Care Nutrition Partnership’s **Nutrition Checklist resource** for long day care centres was officially launched at the Lady Gowrie Child Centre on Thursday the February 20, 2003.

The checklist has been sent to all child care centres in the state. Forward any inquiries to Thea Pruul CHDF phone: (08) 8161 7777.

# Cooks Connection

Compiled by Simone Lee, The Cancer Council South Australia

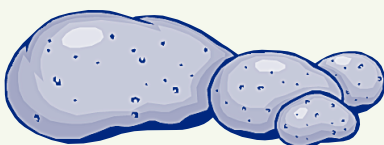
## Create-your-own ...

Children of all ages (and most adults too) like food to be served in just a certain way. Unlike adults however, children may refuse foods they would usually eat, if they do not look or taste the way they are used to. This is one reason why fast food outlets do so well. The burger looks and tastes exactly the same – EVERY TIME!

One way to help combat food refusal is to allow children to serve up a meal for themselves, just the way they like it. It may be a bit messy, but letting children decide exactly how much of a particular food they want and where exactly on the plate they want it, can in some instances help to overcome this problem. Some dishes are more suited to this than others and two ideas are given below.

## Baked potatoes

- Dry roast small potatoes in a very hot oven until golden on the outside and very soft on the inside. Allow to cool a little before serving.
- Prepare various toppings for the potatoes, limiting the number to around five.



Topping ideas include: chopped ham, grated cheese, sour cream, grated carrot, coleslaw, grated cucumber, natural yoghurt, finely sliced capsicum, chopped fresh tomato, tomato sauce, pineapple pieces, sultanas, creamed corn.

- Lay out potatoes and toppings on the table and watch the kids create their own masterpiece!

## Mexican Burritos-

- Warm any flat bread in a microwave, or wrap in foil and heat in the oven until soft.
- In the meantime, prepare the different burrito fillings. Include savoury mince (beef or chicken), shredded lettuce, chopped fresh tomato, mild salsa, grated cheese, natural yoghurt and mashed kidney beans.
- To make burritos, spoon fillings in a line onto the warm flat bread. Fold one side of the bread over the filling, then fold up about 5 cms of one end. Fold over the other side of the bread to complete the burrito (one end should remain open).



# What's Happening

- Birth to Age Three Pre-Conference Symposium "Caring Connections" 1 May 2003. 1.00 pm-5:30pm Adelaide Convention Centre For more information: [www.octf.sa.edu.au](http://www.octf.sa.edu.au)
- Early Childhood Conference Our Children The Future 3 - 'Respect, Connect, Reflect' 1-4 May 2003, Adelaide Convention Centre For more information: [www.octf.sa.edu.au](http://www.octf.sa.edu.au)
- Nutrition Checklist Workshops. In 2003, workshops will be available for cooks in the development and review of childcare centre menus using the recently launched Nutrition Checklist for long day care centres. To register your interest, please contact Thea Pruul at the Centre for Health Promotion, ph (08) 8161 7777.
- Regency Institute of TAFE, Food and Beverage Processing section will be offering short courses on *Hygiene for Food Handlers* in 2003. Although formal food safety training is not legally required for food handlers, some centres may choose for staff to attend a course. Short courses are run for 3 hours a week for 3 weeks. The next sessions will run between 5pm and 8pm on April 28, May 5 and May 12. For more information contact Annie Jeffries at Regency Institute of TAFE, ph (08) 8348 1954 or (08) 8348 1962. Alternatively child care centres can refer to the food safety information kits that have been produced and distributed by DHS. For more information phone (08) 8226 7107

# Resources

- **Planning Nutritious Long Day Care Menus: Nutrition Checklist and Support Materials**

A nutrition checklist and booklet has been developed to assist childcare centres to provide nutritious food for children in their care. The checklist will assist with developing and reviewing childcare menus.

**Cost:** free to all long day care centres and nutritionists

**Contact:** Thea Pruul, ph (08) 8161 7777 or via email: pruult@mail.wch.sa.gov.au

- **Family Food video**

A practical video for parents to help deal with food refusal, fussy eating and encouraging children to try new foods.

Produced by the Dietitians Association of Australia (Tasmanian branch) and the Community Nutrition Unit, Department of Health and Human Services. Available to borrow from SA Dental Service, ph (08) 8295 2311 and Noarlunga Health Services, ph (08) 8392 4500.

- **Sharing a Picture of Children's Development**

A communication framework for long day care centres to plan systematic ways of communicating with parents. It also looks at how childcare can be a part of an integrated local service system for families in the early years.

Available from Australian Dairy Corporation, ph 1800 817 736

**Cost:** free to long day care centres (otherwise \$70).

- **Relaxed and Social – a positive approach to children's eating**

This package is designed to enable staff to plan opportunities to communicate children's health and development issues in more depth with parents. It encourages an approach that promotes early intervention, is sustainable in the long-term, and is proactive rather than problem focused.

Available from Australian Dairy Corporation, ph 1800 817 736

**Cost:** free if centre has a copy of 'Sharing a Picture of Children's Development' (above).

- **Connections newsletter**

A national publication for childcare staff and child health nurses from the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Available from Australian Dairy Corporation, ph 1800 817 736

**Cost:** free

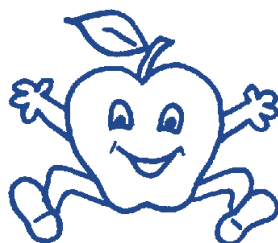
- **Parenting SA Parent Easy Guides**

#21: Feeding Toddlers and #58: Feeding Children

Produced by Parenting SA, ph (08) 8303 1660

[www.parenting.sa.gov.au](http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au)

**Cost:** free in South Australia



## **The SA Child Care Nutrition Partnership aims to promote good nutrition for all South Australian children in early childhood services.**

Partners include representatives from Child Care Associations, Department of Education and Children's Services, TAFE, Gowrie Training Centre, SA Dental Service, child care centre cooks, Women's & Children's Hospital (Department of Nutrition and Food Services, the Children's Health Development Foundation and Eat Well SA), The Cancer Council South Australia, Community Health Services and Department of Human Services.

### **Editorial Policy**

Food Matters aims to promote good nutrition in early childhood by providing nutrition information, advice and support to carers of young children and show casing child care food and nutrition initiatives. While every effort is made to include articles which meet these objectives, inclusion does not necessarily imply endorsement by the SA Child Care Nutrition Partnership. This newsletter may be copied for educational and non-profit purposes with acknowledgement.

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