

HEALTHY EATING POLICY

At Deira Private School, we actively encourage children and parents to participate in our Healthy Eating Policy. We recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating habits in accordance with the framework 'Every Child Matters'. Deira Private School firmly believes that the early years of a child's life are critically important for the formation of good lifestyle habits, including a positive attitude towards healthy eating.

The school has a monitoring programme intended to check if the students are bringing healthy snacks/tiffin in the school where class monitors lead the programme.

Involvement of parents, caregivers, and community members in efforts to promote healthy eating habits both at school and at home is encouraged by providing resources, workshops, and opportunities for involvement to support families in making nutritious food choices and fostering healthy eating environments.

We ensure that all children's dietary needs are catered for and we are sensitive to the dietary requirement for all cultural, religious and individual preferences. At Deira Private School, we recognise that healthier children learn more effectively and that 'healthy children are happy children'.

Why are nutritional guidelines needed?

Healthy eating and physical activity are essential for healthy growth and development in childhood. To help children develop healthy eating patterns, it is important that the food and eating patterns to which they are exposed-both at home and outside the home, are those which promote positive attitudes to good nutrition.

Nutrition for children aged 1 to 5 years

After weaning on to a variety of food tastes, children should be encouraged to eat a variety of foods from each of the four main food groups every day. Children also need more food when drinking less milk as they get older.

The four main food groups are:

1. **Fruit and Vegetables.** Number of servings per day: 2 vegetables and 2 seasonal fruits-Useful as snacks. Try some raw vegetables with healthy dips if needed or soups.
2. **Bread, Cereals and Potatoes** Number of servings per day: 4 or more. Try to include some at each meal, including some whole meal and whole grain varieties.
3. **Milk and Dairy Foods** Number of servings per day: 3. Children aged one to five need about one pint of whole milk a day. Drinking more than a pint may spoil the appetite for other foods. Cheese, yoghurt, butter, cream, from age frais and milk puddings are healthy alternatives.

4. **Meat, Fish and Alternatives** Number of servings per day: 2 Encourage children to try different foods from this group, e.g. lamb, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, baked beans, lentils and other types of pulses. (Pork and beef is not allowed).
5. The fifth food group, the **Sugars**, should be restricted to special occasions only.

Specific Nutrients for Consideration

Vitamin C is important in maintaining good health and has a role in helping the body to absorb iron if both nutrients are present in the same meal. Under-5s should be encouraged to eat foods containing vitamin C – for example citrus fruit and fruit juices, potatoes, broccoli, and other green vegetables, tomatoes and peppers. Eating four portions of fruit and vegetables a day will ensure an adequate vitamin C intake.

Energy It is important that children under 5 years of age get adequate healthy calories from nutrient dense homemade food required for their growth and development. However, adults and children over 5 are encouraged to eat a diet that is high in starchy foods and low in fat. It is advised to stay clear of highly processed/packaged foods.

Fat: The current advice for adults and children over 5 years is to consume a diet in which about 35% of their daily energy needs are provided by the fat in food. The fat intake of children under 2 should not be restricted as the under-2s need energy and nutrient-dense food which packs a lot of calories and other nutrients into a small amount of food.

Iron The iron intake of children under 5 is sometimes lower than currently recommended and there is some evidence to suggest that low iron status occurs in this age group. Therefore a diet that is high in iron-rich food such as meat, poultry and fish as well as fruits and vegetables should be encouraged in this age group. (Meat and meat dishes are also a good source of zinc). Iron is particularly provided by main meals. Drinks (including milk) and many snacks are likely to be low in iron, so it is important that children receive the bulk of their iron from their meals. Care needs to be taken when menu planning for children who do not eat meat. They should have a varied diet containing foods such as cereals, pulses (peas, beans and lentils), vegetables and fruits to ensure they obtain sufficient iron.

Special Diets

Allergies

Allergic reactions can be very serious and life threatening. All parents have to fill out an allergy form even if the child has no allergy. Deira Private School is strictly a NO NUTS ZONE for all students, irrespective of the allergy status. This includes peanut butter and Nutella.

Vegetarian

A vegetarian diet which provides a variety of cereal foods, vegetables, pulses, fruits and dairy products is likely to supply sufficient nutrients. It is possible for a child to get all the required energy and nutrients from a vegetarian diet with the help of some extra care. The

vegetarian dish should be prepared first and the meat added later for other children. Nutrient-rich foods such as milk, cheese and eggs can provide protein, vitamin A, calcium and zinc but obtaining enough iron from a meat-free diet may be more difficult. If the child eats fish, iron can be found in oily fish such as sardines, pilchards and tuna. Iron is also found in pulses such as beans and lentils, in dried fruit and in iron fortified breakfast cereals. The iron is more easily absorbed if the child has foods or drinks that are high in vitamin C. Parents must also mention in the form if the child is vegetarian.

Food intolerance

While many parents believe that their children are sensitive to certain foods, the true incidence is likely to be very much lower than reported. Parents requesting special diets for their children because of food allergy should be encouraged to seek advice from a doctor or Registered Dietitian if they have not already done so. It is unwise to restrict food choice among young children without appropriate help and advice. However, it is important to note that a Department of Health Expert Panel recommends that, in children with a family history of atopic disease (asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy), peanuts and peanut products should be avoided until the child is 3 years old. Whole nut products should not be given to children under the age of five because of the risk of choking.

Healthy Lunch

How to pack a healthy lunch?

- Raw and cooked vegetables and fruit, diluted fruit juice and dried fruit all contribute to daily fruit and vegetable portions.
- Children need starchy foods for energy. These include bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, yam and sweet potato.
- Choose combinations of colours to make the food attractive. Three or four defined areas of colour look good on a plate
- A combination of different textures increases appeal. Children will appreciate crisp, crunchy, chewy, smooth and soft foods.
- Taste should be varied but meals containing too many different or new flavours may not be acceptable to children.
- Some finger foods as well as foods which require cutlery allow variation at mealtimes.

Healthy Snacks include:

Egg Muffins	Mangoes	Dried fruits
Cottage cheese	Sunflower seeds	Diced vegetables
Hard Boiled eggs	Soy chips or Kale	Vegetable sticks
Hummus	Bean salad	Watermelon wheels

Fruit smoothies	Tuna	Bananas
Sliced apples	Sliced chicken breast	Berries
Frozen/sliced grapes	Pickles	Orange slices
Jello	Broccoli Florets	Yoghurt
Green Salad	Olives	Protein bars

How and when to pack a lunch:

- Preferably morning time is the best. But we know it's not always possible. Food can be packed the night before and kept in the fridge in an airtight container.
- Make sure containers seal properly.
- Ziploc bags can also be used to keep food fresh.
- Fruits like banana and apples can be cut up in smaller pieces and kept in the fridge. Squeeze a few drops of lemon on so it wouldn't brown.

Sustainability and Involvement

- Involve parents, caregivers, and community members in efforts to promote healthy eating habits both at school and at home by providing resources, workshops, and opportunities for involvement to support families in making nutritious food choices and fostering healthy eating environments.
- Promote sustainable food practices, including efforts to reduce food waste, minimize packaging and single-use plastics, and support local agriculture and food systems. Consider incorporating principles of environmental stewardship and food justice into the healthy eating policy.

What is a serving?

This depends on the age of the child and the stage they have reached. It is better to give a little food and wait for the child to reach (or ask) for more, than to give them too much. This also saves waste. The more foods a child tries, the more likely they are to enjoy a varied diet, but don't expect them to eat a full portion at every meal. A varied diet is associated with better health as it is more likely to contain all the nutrients the body needs.



Sustainable Food Practices

As part of our commitment to healthy living and environmental responsibility, the school integrates sustainability principles into food-related practices. This policy encourages students, staff, and families to make mindful choices that promote health, equity, and environmental stewardship.

1. Reducing Food Waste

- Students are encouraged to take only what they can finish.
- Promote the sharing of surplus food in safe, hygienic ways (e.g., food sharing tables or donation drives, where possible).
- Educate students about the environmental impact of food waste through classroom activities and awareness campaigns.

2. Minimizing Packaging and Plastics

- Discourage the use of single-use plastics, such as disposable cutlery, straws, and plastic bags.
- Encourage the use of reusable containers, bottles, and lunch boxes.
- Promote bulk purchasing and eco-friendly packaging options for school events, canteens, and catering.

3. Supporting Local Agriculture and Food Systems

- Prioritize seasonal, locally sourced, and fresh produce in school canteen offerings.
- Collaborate with local farmers, suppliers, and community food initiatives to promote sustainable sourcing.
- Organize educational activities (e.g., farm visits, gardening projects) to connect students with the food cycle.

4. Environmental Stewardship

- Integrate lessons on sustainability, healthy eating, and global food systems into the curriculum.
- Highlight the links between food choices, climate change, and natural resource conservation.
- Celebrate events such as Earth Day, World Food Day, and Sustainability Week with themed activities.

5. Food Justice and Equity

- Ensure that healthy, sustainable food options are accessible and affordable for all students.
- Promote inclusivity by respecting cultural and dietary needs.
- Encourage awareness of global inequalities in food access and the importance of fair trade practices.

School Monitoring Programme

- The school will implement a **Healthy Snacks/Tiffin Monitoring Programme** to encourage accountability among students.
- **Class monitors**, under teacher guidance, will record whether students bring healthy, balanced, and sustainable snacks or meals.
- Positive reinforcement strategies (e.g., certificates, recognition boards, class rewards) will be used to encourage consistency.
- Parents will be reminded of the importance of sending nutritious, plastic-free snacks to school, supporting both student health and sustainability goals.
- This programme builds **student responsibility and leadership**, helping them become role models for healthy and eco-friendly habits.

Written By: Ankita Ramchandani	Approved By: Roshi Tandon
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