

## SHORT COURSES FOR VACATION CARE WORKERS

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### Course Number 9: Healthy Lifestyle

Course Duration 1.5 hours

#### **Aim**

This short course aims to provide you with an opportunity to learn more about nutrition and how we can shape children's attitudes towards food.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

- Participants will be shown how to develop the child's capacity to care for their own physical needs.
- Participant will discuss strategies to overcome constraints and to establish an environment that encourages children to complete tasks for themselves.
- Participants will develop skills to create opportunities for children to develop their understanding of physical needs.

### **All children benefit from practising social skills**

At vacation care centres workers have the time and opportunity to involve children in social activities and life skills, and if well planned the children will enjoy the responsibility.

Skills children can learn from your food program are:

- Budgeting
- Shopping
- Food preparation
- Cooking
- Cleaning up

They also learn teamwork, taking turns and cooperation skills. The preparing and sharing of food will be seen as a positive group activity and can encourage and enhance friendship skills.

Some children seem to know instinctively how to make friends quickly, others take longer and some find it very difficult to make friends and often feel rejected. As workers we need to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop life/social skills that allow them to get along with their peers and to participate as members of a group at school, in teams or in out of school programs.

### **Eating as a social occasion**

Think about your centre, is there time for children to relax and talk and share not only food, but also the company of friends. For each centre the challenge will be different as space, equipment, budgets and numbers may vary. Many centres already have cooking activities as a regular and popular part of their program; others with limited space and equipment may not have involved children in this way, but if you are serving food to children you should be able to plan for the children to be involved in cooking or food preparation at some time during any week.



Office for Women  
NSW Premier's Department

Funded by the NSW Premier's Department (Office for Women) through the Women's Grant Program

Shopping or preparing shopping lists is another activity that children can enjoy if properly planned, such as discussions around shopping lists contents, cost estimates, with actual shopping trips being short and focused on the food buying. Budgeting fits naturally into this as alternatives are discussed and prices compared.

Not only is cleaning up a good way of learning skills in group responsibility and teamwork, it is also a good opportunity for an adult and a small group of children to work together and gives the chance for conversation and sharing ideas. It can also help break down stereotypes the children may hold regarding gender roles in the home, such the women cooking and cleaning.

## **The constraints we work under**

The reality is that for many centres there are difficulties such as:

1. Lack of money
2. No cooking facilities
3. No running water/no hot water
4. Shared facilities where no mess is allowed

### **1. Lack of money**

Whatever the amount of money available, budgeting and planning make the dollars go further. Wasted food is expensive, so

- do not buy large quantities of perishable goods and store carefully.
- buy larger sizes of regularly used foods and compare brand prices where possible.
- freeze bread but do not refrigerate it (freezing stalls the staling process, refrigeration speeds it up).
- buy fruit and vegetables that are in season. They may be cheaper and fresher.
- grate cheese rather than cutting it to make it go further.
- try to think of alternative menu items that are more cost effective.

### **2. Lack of facilities**

If this is your problem you are no doubt working towards having better conditions. However it is possible to cook with a microwave, an electric frying pan, a toaster, a BBQ, or a toasted sandwich maker (jaffles).

Look for 'no cook' recipes. Sandwiches will still provide a good nutritious snack on most days and the presentation and fillings can be varied. 'Picnic' meals are enjoyed by children and are one solution when messy foods are being offered.

An electric frying pan is a cost effective piece of equipment when cooking facilities are limited. The pan can be used for toasted sandwiches, johnny-cakes, fried rice, French toast, pancakes and more. Popcorn can also be cooked in the frying pan, but keep the lid on. If you are working in crowded conditions, be aware of safety as the pan can burn. Older children can learn to observe safety precautions and cook with little supervision.

## Activity 1

How can the centre contribute to the child's social skills?

In small groups plan a healthy low cost lunch for your centre that the children can assist in preparing. Remember to list the ingredients, total cost and the recipes used

Look at the recipe books and/or using your own ideas and look for the following:

- Minimal food budgets
- No cook recipes
- Limited equipment - frying pan only
- Well equipped kitchen facilities
- Recipes using common ingredients.
- Remember to choose healthy foods

## Cooperation and sharing responsibilities

To encourage independence and the idea that meal times are times for cooperation and socialisation, staff may find some of the following ideas useful:

Set up a self-service areas that allow children to serve themselves. Discussion would need to take place between staff and children re times and procedures for preparation, serving, eating and cleaning up. A staff member should be assigned to the area to assist when necessary and to remind children to use safe hygienic procedures. The children could make signs to remind everyone of the correct procedures.

Having a staff member available gives children the opportunity to learn how to gauge when they need assistance from an adult.

To help make meal times relaxed and pleasant, get staff members to sit and eat with the children. This provides a good opportunity for informal discussion about health issues and the importance of exercise.

Staff can be great role models for appropriate behaviour. Staff can model good hygiene, nutrition, safety practices, cooperation and manners.

Encourage children to serve themselves. Serve food on platters and serve drinks in jugs so that children can pour their own.

Allow children time to complete tasks, to learn, to make a mess and how to clean it up.

## Activity 2

List 3 ways when running a cooking activity that we can encourage children to take responsibility and work as a team.

In small groups discuss and list some safety and hygiene procedures children need to learn and follow. Return and brainstorm ideas with the whole group.

## Nutrition

“Good food helps to build strong bones, muscles and other body tissues, Good nutrition also provides children with the type of energy needed for active play. School age children need a well balanced diet with enough food to satisfy bigger appetites, growing bodies and increased activity. It is encouraged to develop healthy eating habits.” Steve Musson in *School Aged Child Care*.

Research would suggest that many children and young people are not having an adequate diet with many missing breakfast and substituting high energy snack foods for a balanced, nutritious diet.

In planning our approach to serving nutritious snacks/meals, we need to consider the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents (NHMRC, 2003) and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating:

For more information see the following website: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/\\_files/n30.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/_files/n30.pdf)

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally

- Growth should be checked regularly for young children.
- Physical activity is important for all children and adolescents.

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods. Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta, noodles), preferably wholegrain.
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives.
- Include milk, yoghurts, cheese and/or alternatives.
  - Reduced milk, yoghurts are not suitable for young children under 2 years because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents.
- Choose water as a drink
- Alcohol is not recommended for children

### **Current research undertaken by nutritionists indicates that children's diets are often lacking in both calcium and iron.**

Calcium is necessary for the formation of bones and teeth, for normal clotting of blood and for proper functioning of muscles. Dairy foods – milk, cheese and yoghurt are the more readily available sources of calcium and should be included in the daily diet of growing children.

Iron is necessary for the formation of haemoglobin – part of the red blood cells. It is haemoglobin that transports oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. If insufficient iron is obtained from the food, anaemia and tiredness will result. Richest sources of iron are liver, heart, kidney and lean meat. Chicken, fish, wholemeal cereals, breakfast cereals with added iron, eggs, legumes, dried fruits, nut pastes (eg peanut butter) and leafy green vegetables provide some iron.

### **The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating**

This guide provides information about the amounts and kinds of food that you need each day to get enough nutrients essential for good health and well being. The pie graph depicts a variety of foods as part of our everyday diet.

#### **The five food groups are:**

1. Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles – provide energy, carbohydrate, protein, B group vitamins and dietary fibre.
2. Vegetables, legumes – provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, dietary fibre and carbohydrate.

3. Fruit – provides vitamins, carbohydrate and dietary fibre.
4. Milk, yoghurt, cheese – provide energy, protein, calcium, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and the fat soluble vitamins.
5. Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, legumes – provide energy, protein, iron, niacin, vitamin B12 and zinc.

Extra foods – eaten sometimes or in small amounts:

- Some foods don't fit into the five food groups. They are not essential to provide the nutrients the body needs and some contain too much added fat, salt and sugars. These goods are likely to contribute large amounts of energy. However, they can add to the enjoyment of eating a healthy diet.
- Examples include biscuits, cakes, pastries, soft drinks, high fat snack items such as crisps, pies, sausage rolls and other takeaways, lollies and chocolates.
- Margarines and oils also fits into this group of foods. Choose unsaturated margarines and oils based on olive, canola, peanut, sunflower, safflower, corn and soya bean oil.

### **Encourage children to:**

- Choose foods from each of the five food groups everyday.
- Choose different varieties of foods from within each of the five food groups from day to day.

Some children may be allergic to certain foods or food additives, others may have dietary restriction beliefs. This information should be obtained at enrolment and a list kept in the food preparation area.

### **Encourage water as a drink for children**

Water is essential for the maintenance of life. Without it the body cannot function. Water is required for cell structure, body temperature control and fluid composition, excretion of waste via the kidneys and the gastrointestinal tract. It must be consumed as water or other drinks because not enough can be extracted from solid food.

Inadequate water intake or excessive losses compared with requirements, may lead to dehydration. Dehydration will usually cause a child to feel thirsty therefore water should be available for children and staff at all times. Water supplies no energy so can quench thirst without increasing energy.

If every time children are thirsty they drink something other than water, the drink contributes significantly to their overall energy intake. If this causes more energy than is expended the child may become overweight or obese.

### **Care for your child's food: prepare and store it safely**

#### **Activity 3**

Using the nutrition information above list three healthy alternatives to replace the following snack items.

- Potato chips
- Lollies/sweets
- Soft drinks

## Recommended Resource

*Vacation Care Training and Resource Kit* available from Network

## Useful publications

- see Network's website [www.netoosh.org.au](http://www.netoosh.org.au)
- *Nutrition Ready to go @ OOSH*
- The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (posters, booklet and brochure) and the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents (Food for Health – booklet or brochure) available from Publications Officer, Population Health Division, Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing. Toll free call 1800 020 103 (ext 8654) or email: [phd.publications@health.gov.au](mailto:phd.publications@health.gov.au)
- Kids in the Kitchen Cookbook (1998) by the Health Promotion Service, Health Department WA, Ph: (08) 9222 2062.