

TRUST POLICY

Nursery Handbook – Food and Drink Policy



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1. Introduction

Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information must be shared by the provider with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food. At each mealtime and snack time providers must be clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.

3.65 pg.37 EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

2. Policy Statement

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust nurseries are committed to provide children with healthy and diverse menus.

We accommodate a variety of diets; vegetarian, vegan, various allergies and cultural/religious specifications.

3. Nurseries Aims

It is important that parent and carers are confident that snack and mealtimes are a happy and safe experience. It is a time where a child can enjoy food but also be given the opportunity to try new foods in a comfortable and social experience.

Sussex House and Wendy House nurseries will aim to:

- UHSussex Nursery Staff complete a Level 2 or 3 Food Hygiene Certificate.
- Before the child starts in the nursery the Parent or Carer will be required to complete Admission documentation that provides information on food intolerance/allergies, dietary needs and preferences. There will also be an additional form for details of the stage of weaning and if there are any food consuming difficulties. This information will be shared throughout the nursery and catering supplies.
- Discussions with the Parent or Carer will take place before a weaning baby is transferred to food provided by the nursery. This will also be documented.
- Mothers are welcomed into the nursery if they wish to continue nursing their baby when returning to work however this would be within the Baby Room as we do not have a private area available in the nurseries.
- Parent or Carers are asked not to store food, sweets or drinks in bags which are left the nursery rooms or corridors.
- Parent or Carers are requested to provide a named cup/beaker for their child that can be used during times of the day other than snack and mealtimes.

- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices by self-serving food and drinks and feeding themselves.
- Children are encouraged to try small amount of all foods (subject to dietary requirements).
- No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking.
- There is always a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate during meals times.
- UHSussex Nursery Staff complete annual Paediatric Basic Life Support Training including Choking and Anaphylaxis with the use of EpiPens.
- UHSussex Nursery Staff undertake Food Safety Training, and part of their local induction programme is to ensure all food is prepared to prevent choking.
- We ensure that staffs sit with the children when eating to promote a social occasion, also to ensure safe supervision.
- Babies and young children are seated safely in highchairs or appropriately sized low chairs whilst eating. All children have to be seated either at a table or safely on the floor when eating any food.
- Staff to demonstrate sensitivity in providing children's diets, preferences and allergies. Staffs are not to use a child's diet, preferences or allergies as a label or to be singled out.
- The nurseries embrace cultural differences i.e. eating habits are respected.
- Food is never used as a punishment, or as a reward. Children are encouraged to try all foods however will not forfeit food i.e. not to have a pudding if not all main course has been consumed.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not to be rushed.
- Nursery staff will encourage lots of conversation, table manners, and use of words such as 'please' and 'thank you' during mealtimes.
- The menus are displayed for Parent/Carer access.
- Parents/Carers will be provided with a summary of the foods their child has consumed throughout the nursery session.
- We provide utensils which are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

- Children are encouraged to use utensils to serve their own meal or snack to help encourage independence and social interaction.
- Nursery staff will encourage children by the age of 2 years to be drinking from an 'open cup' and by 3 years to be using a plate with knife and fork.
- Should a child experience a choking incident that requires interventions, nursery staff with the support of the Nursery Manager will document the incident, contact the Parents/Carers who will be advised that the child should be sent by a medical professional. The Nursery Manager will investigate the circumstances to ensure staff are fully supported and prevent further incidents.

4. Meals Available

All the meals provided in our nurseries are supplied by University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust and included within the sessional fee charge.

If possible, the Trusts catering department will supply additional foods to meet dietary requirements or preferences however for specific items these may have to be supplied from home.

Breakfast:

Children who arrive before 8.00am will be offered breakfast. The children are offered a selection of cereals and toast. Occasionally if a child arrives after this time and requires breakfast, this will be prepared for the child to have within their playroom at a convenient time when staffing is available to prepare and supervise the meal.

If there are persistent late arrivals requiring breakfast the Nursery Manager or Deputy Manager will meet with the parent or carer to discuss the arrival time of the session and if this needs to be amended.

Snack:

A snack will be provided mid-morning. This comprises of fruit or vegetables, one protein such as cheese or hummus, one carbohydrate breadstick, cracker or rice cake and milk or water to drink.

Drinks:

Fresh water is always available for the children throughout the day. Milk is offered at breakfast, mid-morning and teatime, as well as water. Occasionally in winter hot chocolate or warm milk is offered when there has been outdoor play.

In very extreme heat children may also be offered diluted juice to ensure they remain hydrated.

For children who drink milk, we provide whole pasteurised milk.

Fruit juices / squashes and fizzy drinks from home will not be offered.

Lunch:

A full cooked hot lunch is provided for the children by UH Sussex catering department.

The food is delivered in a heated trolley and served at approved temperatures.

Staffs who prepare food for the children attend basic Food Hygiene Training.

All main meals contain at least one protein, one carbohydrate plus vegetables. The children have one portion appropriate to their age and a second portion will be offered of vegetables. There is one portion of dessert offered unless it is fruit.

Tea:

A 'High Tea' is offered between 3.00pm / 4pm where children are offered a variety of sandwiches i.e. Ham, cheese, tuna, egg mayonnaise. Sometimes sandwich alternatives are offered like toast, crackers, crumpets, pancakes for Shrove Tuesday, or other foods relating to celebrations. Fruit or vegetables plus occasional yoghurts, hummus or foods the children have prepared may also be offered. Milk and water will also be available for the children.

**We would recommend that children are offered an additional meal or evening snack when they are home.*

The menus rotate on a two-week basis and are balanced and nutritious which are reviewed on a regular basis. All menus are dietician approved to ensure the children consume foods within government guidelines.

5. Under 1yr Feeds and Breast Feeding

Many of our babies and young toddlers attending the nurseries are already on weaning ladder and reducing their milk intake however for those children requiring milk feeds during the nursery session the nursery will:

- We would recommend that parents/carers provide made up formula bottles in labelled bottles prior to arriving at the nursery. This is stored in the baby room fridge until used. Please ensure your child attends nursery with the required amount of milk to be consumed for that session.
- If a parent would like the milk to be made fresh, then please provide a bottle with cooled boiled water and the formula milk measured correctly in a separate container which is labelled.

- Milk is heated within a microwave or a water jug, and parents/carers will be asked the preference.
- All baby food that is stored in the fridge should be placed with the child's name clearly labelled.
- Staff should check to ensure that the correct food is always served.
- The Nursery staffs re-heat the food in a microwave to the correct temperature and then cooled to serve to the child.
- Mothers are actively welcome to breast feed their child during the session. Unfortunately, the nursery is unable to provide a private, separate area however there is comfortable sitting within the baby playroom

*Please note the nursery will not settle a child to sleep in a cot or mat bed consuming a bottle of milk (please refer to sleep and rest policy)

6. Weaning (EYFS Changes)

The Early Years Foundations Stage Framework 2026 places a higher emphasis of the importance of safer eating and ensuring that all staff that are caring for babies and young children have a full understanding of their dietary needs and their stages of development in terms of weaning and eating solid foods.

During the early settling meetings in the nursery with the Key Person, Room Leader or Nursery Manager will discuss with the parent/carer a Weaning/Food Plan to gauge where the child is at in terms of moving from breastmilk/formula feeds to solid food. These forms will be regularly updated during the child's time in the nursery ensuring that all practitioners have a good understanding of appropriate, safe foods for that individual.

Sometimes a child may regress with foods due to illness, and this is something that the staff will be able to support the child and parents with and documentation will be updated accordingly.

7. Foods Avoided in Nursery

As a setting we will endeavour to ensure that all allergy foods are not permitted, however we recognise that sometimes foods will be transported into the nursery that may have traces of ingredients that we were not aware of.

UH Sussex nurseries to aim to:

- No food-containing nuts are provided in the nursery, and we would advise parents bringing food from home into the setting to avoid all foods with nut ingredients i.e. peanut butter, chocolate spreads.
- No Kiwi
- Popcorn due to choking

- We recommended no Fresh Strawberries under the age of 1 year unless parental wishes
- Honey under the age of 1 year
- Sugar and salt are not added to any foods
- There are no shellfish or raw fish on our menus. Fish with a risk of bones is not served on the children's menus.

8. Allergies and Intolerances

The Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance 2025 says that providers should know or any Food Allergies prior to a child's admission. During the weaning process and babies are introduced to new foods is when allergic reactions can happen, therefore it is essential that the nursery staff work closely with parents/carers and health professionals to ensure allergy action plans are in place.

- Parents/Carers are required to inform the nursery of their child preferences; any food allergies and any dietary requirements needed for medical or cultural reasons.
- An alternative where possible will be available for example main cooked meal, bread for breakfast or tea, additional fruit for snack however any further foods which are deemed beyond a reasonable adjustment UH Sussex nurseries will advise parent or carer to supply those additional foods.
- The nurseries will not introduce a 'new food' to a child that has an allergy/intolerance that could potentially cause a reaction. If a parent/carer wishes for a child to try a small amount of food that could cause a reaction this should be within a safe controlled environment or at home.
- All staff; volunteers and students will be made aware of all the children's special requirements. Necessary training will be given if the use of an 'Epipen' if needed.

*Celebration cakes brought into the nursery for the children to share must be labelled 'Does not contain nuts.'

9. Children with Additional Support Needs and Other Diet Requirements

We recognise that there are some children that may have specific dietary requirements or due to a physical or developmental issue that swallowing or reflux can affect their ability to eat certain foods.

For other children that have sensory needs in relation to foods such as colour, smell and texture mealtimes can be a difficult activity. Therefore, it is important that from those initial settling visits and throughout their time in nursery the staff work closely with the child, parents and family to ensure that where possible the needs are met, and mealtimes are a sociable and relaxed experience.

Any special requirements regarding mealtimes or food association must be documented and regularly reviewed. If required a doctors or health professional advice may be needed. The Nursery Manager with the assistance of nursery staff and parent/carer will complete a 'Risk Assessment' to highlight the hazards and minimise the risks.

Food may be modified, or an alternative given, utensils or seating arrangements may also be changed to ensure the safe consumption of food but not the single out the child or put them under undue stress.

10. Changes to Plan Menus / Celebrations

There may be occasions when meals stated on the nursery menus are not available and the nursery manager / deputy will have to choose an alternative. Any changes will be in line with the required dietary needs and of a temporary basis.

During the year the nursery management team may change the planned meal to fit in with a celebration or nursery event for example Christmas dinner, Christmas parties or the pre-school room leaver's party. These foods may not necessarily be within a healthy choice menu i.e. pizza, sausage rolls, chicken nuggets however where appropriate the staff will adapt the foods to be suitable for the age and stage of the children.

Occasionally the children may go on a planned outing this may involve taking a packed lunch or ordering food from an outside source. Any changes to the daily menu parents/ carers will be updated and possible choices of food will be offered.

If an alternative food type meal is offered at lunchtime, then a warm teatime option such as beans on toast will be given.

11. Food Activities

University Hospital Sussex nurseries believe that food and nutrition is an integral part of life learning skills and experiences. We incorporate food within our curriculum from sensory use of dried pasta, pulses, jelly and other foods to growing produce in our garden to cooking and promoting healthy diets.

During these activities nursery staff will adhere to children's cultural, dietary, allergy and intolerant needs

12. Oral Health

Providers must promote the good health, including the oral health, of the children they look after.

3.59 pg. 36 EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Promoting good Oral Health in the early years is essential at protecting young teeth and establishing good oral hygiene.

The Early Years Foundation stage focuses on the importance of teaching children how to keep ourselves well. Through an enriched learning environment nursery staff will talk to children about good and bad foods, the importance of dental care by cleaning teeth twice per day and transforming the role play area into a dentist. Periodically we will arrange for outside professionals to come into the setting to show how to take care of our teeth and have dental health resources like toothbrushes and toothpaste for the children to use.

Sugary foods are limited to celebrations only, for example a Christmas party and where possible birthday cakes will be sent home with a child for parental decision.

Nursery staff will encourage children to drink water or milk only and from an open cup at the earliest age possible.

The food supplied by the Trusts catering department will have been approved by the dietician to ensure sugars and fats are age suitable. Should a parent/carer not wish for a child to have the planned dessert than fruit will be offered as an alternative.

13. Staff and Food / Drink Procedures

As nursery settings we actively encourage staff to participate in snack and mealtimes and welcome them to consume food that the children are eating. We recognise that mealtimes provide a rich learning experience where children and staff engage in social and language interaction, where independence is encouraged and fine motor skills are developed.

Staff and Food / Drink Procedures

- Nursery Staff that have participate in the preparation and deliverance of food must undertake Food Hygiene training.
- Staff are to follow food hygiene procedures when preparing foods for example, wash hands, wear an apron, long hair should be tied back. Appropriate food utensils and chopping boards should be used.
- All staff are aware of individual child's dietary needs/preferences and allergies.
- Staff that must cover in other playrooms should be reminded of individual dietary needs/preferences and allergies.
- Staff are to avoid consuming foods that cause allergy reactions whilst in the nursery.
- Staff where possible when consuming foods in a playroom must be the same or like the food the children have.
- Staff should role model good eating habits and eat food sitting at a table, using relative cutlery and plate/bowl.

- Cold drinks to be consumed in the playroom, if hot drinks to be consumed in child access area these must have a lid.
- Cold drinks should be consumed in a cup or bottle. Bottles or cans should not be stored in the playrooms that children can identify its contents.
- Open cups / mugs to be used for the consumption of hot drinks to be used in the staff room or nursery office only.
- Staff consuming foods in the playroom should be of healthy snacks only.

14. Links to other Trust policies

UHSN003 Nursery Handbook - Health & Safety Policy