



Gordon Community Preschool Food & Nutrition Policy - Information & Guidelines for Parents



Food Requirements for Preschool

- Children should bring a separately packed morning tea and lunch, as well as a water bottle.
- All food and drink should be **clearly labelled with the child's name.**
- Food and drink provided should be nutritious and in line with the food suggestions below.

Morning tea and lunch

Morning tea and lunch are to be provided in **separate** containers/paper bags **clearly marked with the child's name** and labelled as "morning tea" or "lunch" to assist in identifying one from the other. This is good preparation for school as it helps children think about two separate meals. The skills involved in opening drink bottles, lunch box, unwrapping morning tea and managing whole fruit etc are also developed.

Healthy Food at Preschool

As lunch is consumed at about 1:30pm, it is recommended that children bring a substantial morning tea to preschool, including some protein and/or carbohydrates as well as vegetables and fruit.

In accordance with Australian Dietary Guidelines, Parents and Carers are encouraged to include in their child's lunch and morning tea:

- Plenty of vegetables of different types and colours, and legumes
- Fruit
- Grain foods (mostly wholegrain or high fibre) such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley
- Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives

The "Healthy Eating for Children" factsheet (link below) provides guidance about appropriate servings of these foods for children of different ages.

Parents and Carers are asked **not** to send foods to preschool that:

- Are high in fat, such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, chips, crisps
- Contain added salt, by reading labels to choose lower sodium options among similar foods
- Contain added sugar



Water bottle

Children must bring a clearly labelled water bottle from which they may drink during the course of the day including at morning tea and lunch. Staff will replenish bottles with water if necessary.

Drinking water will be available to children at all times.



Food Suggestions

We have attached a copy of “Healthy Eating for Children” from the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines which may help guide you as to healthy food choices for your child.

https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/the_guidelines/n55f_children_brochure.pdf

Foods Not Allowed at Preschool



- GCP is a “nut free zone”. Children, parents, staff or visitors are never permitted to bring ANY nuts or nut products to preschool.

Nut products include peanut butter, nutella or any foods containing nuts. Parents are not however, expected to avoid products that have the warning “may contain traces of nuts” or “prepared on the same production line as products containing nuts”.

- Chips, lollies, chocolates, soft drinks, commercial burgers, hot chips and fried foods are **not** allowed at preschool
- Tinned foods are not allowed due to the sharp lids & edges

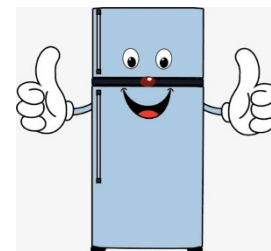
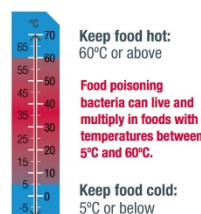
If a child brings inappropriate food to pre-school, staff will speak constructively with the child’s parents. If inappropriate foods continue to be provided, then staff may send a note home and/or elect to send the inappropriate food home. If necessary, a more appropriate food will be provided. Parents will be notified if staff are concerned about the amount of food being sent and/or consumed (ie too much or too little).

Food Storage and Safety

Children’s Services Regulations require that food for children at preschool is kept according to food storage guidelines.

- Food which requires refrigeration or is normally kept refrigerated is recommended to be kept refrigerated at preschool.
- It is recommended by food safety NSW that cooler bags or ice bricks are not an acceptable alternative to refrigeration and are to be used for short periods only.
- Similarly, a thermos or insulated bag/container is **not recommended** as being a way to safely store warm food.
- It is incumbent upon parents to ensure that if refrigeration is required, their children’s lunch and morning tea are placed in the preschool fridges on arrival at preschool. If parents wish for their child’s food to be stored in a thermos or food flask, or outside of the fridge, they **must sign a waiver** (see below) ☆
- Staff will monitor the appropriate storage of children’s food and address concerns about food storage with parents.

The fridges available for storage of children’s morning tea and lunches are located on the verandah. The shelving is colour coded for each class. Shelves are also labelled for “lunch” or “morning tea”. In line with Health Department guidelines, food is stored at or below 5 degrees Celsius.



Food storage continued

Young children are considered to be particularly at risk of food-borne illnesses because their immune systems are still developing. Food that is considered potentially hazardous for food-borne illnesses must be kept refrigerated. The Dietary Guidelines for Children's list of these foods include:

- Raw and cooked meat or foods containing raw or cooked meat
- Dairy products and foods containing dairy products
- Seafood and foods containing seafood
- Cooked rice and pasta
- Processed fruits and vegetables such as salads
- Processed foods containing eggs or other protein-rich food
- Foods that contain any of the foods listed above.

Items which would not normally be refrigerated e.g.: fruit and crackers do not need to be placed in the preschool fridges. Parents and staff should use the list above and common sense to determine what items require refrigeration.

Eating warm food at GCP

- Gordon Community Preschool recognises that for cultural and/or family reasons that many parents do not wish for their children to eat cold food directly from the fridge and would prefer for their child to eat warm food while at preschool. Gordon Community Preschool supports the safe storage of food, however wants to maintain a balance between supporting individual and cultural beliefs/preferences and suggested food storage guidelines. For this reason if parents wish to send their child's food in a thermos or food flask, they may do so and indicate their preference by signing a waiver which is included on the enrolment information form upon enrolment.

Waste free at GCP

- Where possible, Gordon Community Preschool aims to reduce waste and promote reuse and recycling of materials. Families are encouraged to keep wrapping and packaging to a minimum.
- Please limit the use of "pre packaged" food (EG packaged dip style snacks, cheese sticks, yoghurt)
- Instead, consider options such as cutting cheese from a block, yoghurt from a large tub into a reusable container, fresh fruit and vegies – no packaging needed here!
- Where possible avoid glad wrap, alfoil, zip lock bags, and pre packaged drinks.
- Morning tea or lunch may be placed in a paper bag – however, we will send this home again so that it can be re-used.

Birthdays and Treat Days

Birthdays may be celebrated at GCP. Parents may send a cake to share with their child's class. For practical reasons **cup cakes are preferred** and cream cakes should be avoided. Children and families who do not celebrate birthdays will be respected.

'Treat' food or "sometimes food" is also made or shared at preschool on other special occasions, such as party days or other celebrations. There are occasions where food is prepared by teachers or parents as a way of introducing food from different cultures.



Healthy eating at preschool – top tips!

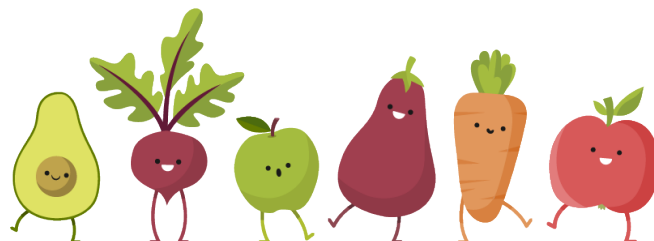


- ★ **Keep it simple and focus on fresh food from home. Packaged food is usually higher in fat, salt and sugar.**
- ★ **Try to pack foods from several different food groups – for example: dairy (cheese or yoghurt), Protein (chicken, meat), vegetables (carrot or celery sticks) and breads/grains (wholemeal bread, wraps, savoury crackers).**
- ★ **Pack water for a drink – not juice, not cordial, not milk – just water.**
- ★ **Cook a little more in the evening and use leftover chicken, or mince for sandwiches as an alternative to processed meats.**
- ★ **Pack the lunch box the night before preschool – that way you can plan a healthy range of foods instead of reaching for the unhealthy treats in the morning rush.**
- ★ **Look for inspiration on line – there are lots of websites that provide photos of healthy lunch boxes or recipes for healthy food for children. Ask your friends to share their healthy food ideas.**
- ★ **Talk to your child’s teachers for ideas – remember it’s important not to over pack or to under pack your child’s food for the day. Children may be overwhelmed if there is too much in the lunch box – but they need enough so they don’t become hungry. It can be hard to get the balance right – so please talk with us here at preschool if you need ideas.**
- ★ **Talk to your child about what you have packed – or better still, involve them in getting the lunch or morning tea ready. This will help your child feel more motivated about eating his/her preschool snack.**
- ★ **Remember to pack lunch and morning tea in a container your child can open. Maybe having a practice at home might help. It is important for children to feel that they can eat independently.**
- ★ **If your child is used to being fed by an adult, make time to practice giving your child lunch or a snack in his/her preschool lunchbox at home. This will help your child become familiar with feeding him/herself.**
- ★ **Remember not to pack too much. Variety is good, however, too many choices can be overwhelming.**

★ **Have** you seen the lunch boxes with compartments or sections? They are a great way to pack food in an attractive and inviting way for children.



- ★ **If** you don't have one of these compartmented lunch boxes - try using silicone cup cake holders (patty pans) inside a lunch box - this is not only a great way to reduce waste, but also helps to divide your child's food up into smaller, more manageable portions.
- ★ **If** it looks attractive and appetising, your child is more likely to eat it.
- ★ **Involve** your child in preparing the lunch box. Parents can encourage their children to eat healthy foods by involving them in packing decisions. Not only does this encourage healthy habits from a young age, it also increases their likelihood to eat those foods, preventing lunch box leftovers.
- ★ **Be patient.** It can take up to 15 times before new foods become familiar and are accepted, so constant exposure is critical. It's important not to give up as this is key to forming healthy habits that last a lifetime.
- ★ **If your child's grandparents or other family members are involved in caring for your child and/or bringing him to and from preschool, please show them this information and help them to support the policies and practices of our healthy nutrition policy at preschool.**
- ★ Finally, leave the treats, lollies and sweet foods at home. We try to model healthy eating at preschool. It can be hard if one child is bringing junk/treat food when others are eating healthy foods.
- ★ If families have special requirements or concerns about what food their child is allowed, they should speak with their child's teacher and/or the Director at the commencement of the preschool year.



Strategies – how GCP will help families and children develop healthy eating habits

- ★ Parents will receive information about appropriate food to pack for their children as well as up to date information on dietary requirements of young children to ensure optimal growth and development.

- ★ Families will have opportunities to discuss ways to maximise the health and well-being of their child/ren via newsletters, notice boards, displays and special visitors. In addition to this, families will be provided with current information about recommended screen time and physical activity.

- ★ Educators will provide families with daily information about their child's intake of food and drinks throughout the day (Informally through conversation).

- ★ Food awareness activities will be included in the preschool programme & will be guided by the EYLF principles and incorporate the child's identity, e.g.
 - hands on preparation of food
 - discussion about food and healthy eating
 - songs, stories, rhymes about food
 - picture books
 - Staff will discuss with children and positively reinforce the importance of hand washing prior to eating and food preparation.
 - Staff will wash their hands prior to eating and food preparation.
 - Staff will sit with the children at morning tea and lunch and when possible will model healthy eating practices. The food being eaten will be discussed with the children.
 - children will be encouraged to try new foods and their food likes and dislikes will be respected
 - Staff will talk to the children about healthy foods, "every day foods" and "sometimes foods"

Good luck! Healthy eating habits begin in the early childhood years. It's important to give our children the best start possible.

