

Nutrition Policy

Rational:

To promote the health and wellbeing of all tamariki and kaiako within Blenheim Early Childhood Centres Inc (BECC)
To ensure BECC promotes the Ministry of Health (MoH) Guidelines in "Reducing kai-related choking for babies/pepi and young children/tamariki". Ensure that kai is served at appropriate times to meet the nutritional needs of tamariki attending.

Objective:

To provide a safe physical environment whilst eating.

Purpose:

1. To help support and encourage whānau to provide healthy lunch box kai for their tamariki.
2. To promote in all tamariki a healthy understanding and attitude towards kai.
3. To promote with Kaiako a healthy understanding and attitude towards kai.
4. To promote and encourage MoH choking guidelines – included in this policy are examples of how to alter high-risk kai to lower its choking risk.
5. To provide an environment that uses whānau and cultural values to support healthy nutrition guidelines.

Policy:

1. BECC provide educational information for whānau regarding best practice in relation to managing risk of choking, healthy kai choices with their tamariki e.g. information at time of enrolment, whānau evenings, pamphlets etc.
2. Kaiako ensure there is a safe physical environment for tamariki when eating:
 - At all times will supervise tamariki when they are eating. They will always have clear visibility of tamariki who are eating and will not be engaged in other tasks that may take away their focus. They will be close enough to tamariki to intervene if necessary and know how to respond if tamariki are choking or having an adverse reaction.
 - Have an appropriate ratio of Kaiako to tamariki at mealtimes.
 - Minimise distractions and encourage tamariki to focus on eating.
 - Ensure there is a designated time where tamariki sit down to eat, rather than continuous grazing.
 - Ask tamariki not to talk with their mouths full.
 - Have tamariki sit up straight when they are eating. Sitting down and maintaining good posture are essential for safe eating and drinking. Do not allow walking, running or playing while tamariki are eating.
Place kai directly in front of tamariki. This helps to prevent them twisting around to the left or right, which can cause them to lose control of the kai in their mouth.
3. Qualified kaiako will hold current first aid certificates which cover choking first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
4. Lunch box guidelines including the MoH guidelines to reducing kai related choking for pepi and young tamariki will be included in the introduction pack to whānau.
5. Tamariki can eat more at preschool and we recommend whānau include more than they would usually eat at home.

6. Kaiako will approach whānau individually when lunchboxes for tamariki are not consistent with the expectations of the centre.
7. Kaiako will regularly educate tamariki on the healthy values of kai and how it links to their own health.
8. Kaiako will role model healthy eating.
9. Water and milk (not flavoured) are the only liquids to be consumed at preschool. Kaiako will remind tamariki to drink water throughout the day and have water available at all times.
10. Lollies and chocolate are discouraged at preschool.
11. Infants under the age of 6 months and other tamariki unable to drink independently are to be held semi-upright when being fed.
12. Any infant milk given to tamariki under the age of 12 months is of a type approved by their whānau.
13. Whānau are supported to breastfeed their tamariki. For mothers who choose to breastfeed, a comfortable area will be made available for them.
14. Kaiako and tamariki use good hygiene practices when dealing with kai around meal times and Tikanga practice's as outlined by the centre.
15. Allergies, kai intolerances and special dietary requirements for tamariki will be a shared responsibility between whānau and the preschool. If tamariki have a life-threatening allergy a plan will be in place to ensure that all kaiako know emergency protocols.
16. At the discretion of the Centre Manager kai may be excluded from the room the tamariki attends at preschool or from the whole preschool. This would only be done in the event of tamariki having a severe kai allergy that has been affirmed by a relevant medical professional.
17. When baking/cooking with tamariki, kaiako will only choose nutritional kai that is compliant with MoH Guidelines to reduce choking risk.
18. Birthdays are a time for celebration, however we encourage a healthy option to be brought in to share with friends e.g. fruit kebabs or platters (all kai must be compliant with the MoH Guidelines to reduce choking). Please talk to the kaiako of your tamariki in regards to their preschool birthday celebration.
19. A record will be kept of all kai served during operating hours (other than that provided by whānau for their own tamariki). Records will show the type of kai provided and ingredients. This record will be held for 3 months as this provides useful information in the event of any allergic reaction that may develop in tamariki attending.
20. Before a BECC event which may include kai items that are on the choking guidelines and/or not seen as healthy kai, a notice will go out to whānau reminding them of the importance of supervising their tamariki.
21. When holding fundraising events where whānau choose to purchase kai items that may not align with everyday healthy kai guidelines, this is acceptable as these are considered occasional events. Where kai items are identified within the MoH choking guidelines, appropriate information and/or risk management strategies will be considered to support tamariki safety.
22. Each preschool has a nutritional folder with a range of useful information available to both whānau and kaiako. Everyone will be encouraged to use it.
23. Funds are available for resources to support nutrition education.
24. When relevant, nutrition related professional development for kaiako will be sourced.
25. For safety reasons kaiako encourage whānau to use an alternative to glad wrap/cling wrap.

How to alter high-risk kai to lower its choking risk – reference from “Ministry of Health Reducing kai-related choking for babies/pepi and young children/tamariki at early learning services”

‘Soft’ means the kai can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.

Kai characteristics	Examples	Choking risk	Changes to reduce risk	
			1-3 years old	4-6 years old
Small hard kai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pieces of raw carrot, apple or celery 	Difficult for young children to bite through and break down enough to swallow safely. Pieces can become stuck in children’s airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. • Cook until soft and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as for 1–3 years. • Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (approximately 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.

Small round or oval kai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit with stones and large seeds or large pips like watermelon Grapes, large berries, cherry tomatoes Raw green peas 	Small round kai can lodge in children's airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove stones and large seeds or large pips. Quarter or finely chop grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller (about half the width of a standard dinner fork). Cook and squash with a fork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halve or quarter grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes Whole cooked green peas are acceptable.
Kai with skin or leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Lettuce and other raw salad leaves, spinach, cabbage Stone fruit (e.g., plums, peaches, nectarines) Apples and pears Tomatoes 	Kai skins are difficult to chew and can completely seal children's airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove skin from chicken. Finely slice or chop salad leaves, spinach and cabbage. Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. Cook until soft and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove skin from chicken. Finely slice or chop salad leaves, spinach and cabbage. Prepare as for 1–3 years. Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
Compressible kai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pieces of cooked meat 	Can fit into the shape of the airway and get wedged tightly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook meat until very tender. Choose mince, shred or chop meat to 8mm x 8mm sized pieces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare as for 1–3 years; or offer thin strips of meat (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand or with a fork.
kai with bones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish Chicken nibbles 	Small bones present a choking risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all bones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all bones.
Thick pastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nut or seed butter 	Can fit to the shape of a child's airway or stick to side of airway.	Use smooth thick pastes sparingly, spreading thinly and evenly onto bread.	Use smooth thick pastes sparingly, spreading thinly and evenly onto bread.
Fibrous or stringy kai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw pineapple 	Fibres make it difficult for children to break up the kai into smaller pieces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peel the skin or strong fibres off where possible. Slice kai thinly across the grain of fibres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peel the skin or strong fibres off where possible. Slice kai thinly across the grain of fibres.

Policy Category	Health and safety
Licensing Criteria	HS115, 116, 117 PF115
Introduction Date	25th August 2008
Policy ratified	23rd June 2026
Automatic review date	June 2027
Supporting Documents	Ministry of Health: Reducing kai-related choking in pepi and young tamariki at the early learning service Ministry of Health: Healthy kai and drink guidance

This policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate and effective. Review may occur: if any statutory requirements change • if any roles are amended • if any part of the policy becomes ineffective or problematic • if suggestions for improvement are received • when the policy is scheduled for automatic review

Chairperson: Autumn Faulkner

Signature: 

Date: 23 June 2026