



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

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Evaluating Your Wellness Policy

A child care wellness policy, although not required, provides a positive impression to parents and the community about your commitment to good health and nutrition. Developing and implementing a wellness policy demonstrates the facility's commitment to the health and well-being of children.

A good practice is to review the policy at least once a year. This review will help you identify the strengths and challenges of the wellness policy. The following points are some examples of when updates may be needed.

- The policy of offering a variety of vegetables has been implemented, but children are not eating them. More nutrition education or changes in meal presentation may be considered to strengthen and meet the goals of the wellness policy.
- New federal regulations make changes to the meal pattern. These changes should be reflected



in the wellness policy.

- A new kitchen in the facility makes family-style meals possible. A section on family-style dining in the child care setting should be added to the wellness policy.

Evaluate your policy by observing the implementation, determining the effectiveness, and identifying improvements for a more efficient policy. Begin by observing the practices of a typical day. Determine if the procedures outlined in the wellness policy are being followed by the staff. Sometimes, old habits return or new staff are unaware of the procedures outlined in the policy. Consider posting reminders or providing additional training that

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Evaluating Your Wellness Policy

addresses the areas of concern. Remember to compliment staff on the procedures that are being carried out well.

Next, evaluate the effectiveness or overall success of the policy. Fortunately, there are many tools for measuring and evaluating your policy, such as a child care provider survey, a parent survey, a review of current menus and lesson plans, and observations of children's eating and activity behaviors. For example, if the wellness policy states, "Preschoolers will be offered weekly a variety of vegetables such as dark green, orange, red, and deep yellow vegetables." Some ways to evaluate this statement would be to review the current menu, observe meals, and review the grocery store receipts.

Finally, the evaluation should be used to make needed changes and improvements that will keep the policy up-to-date. These changes can improve how the program operates to meet the new regulations, the facility's needs, and best practices. Changes may need to be considered when nutrition and physical activity goals are not being met, new research or regulations are available, there is a change in the child care facility, or when new schedules or curriculum are implemented.

Regularly evaluating the wellness policy by observing implementation, determining the effectiveness of the policy, and identifying improvements for a more efficient policy will help to keep your policy up-to-date. This practice will show your program's strong commitment to child wellness.



Vegetable of the Month: Green soybeans (edamame)



Edamame, the Japanese name for green soybeans, originated in China and was considered a sacred plant. It is often referred to as a super food because it is the only vegetable that is a complete protein, meaning it contains all of the essential amino acids. In addition to being high in protein, edamame also contains vitamin A, calcium, and fiber.

Edamame is in season during the summer months but is more commonly seen in the freezer section year round. It is a fun snack for kids to eat right out of the pod after it has been steamed. It is also a good addition to salads and stir frys.



Recipe of the Month

Bowties

The recipe, *Bowties*, is one of many recipes in the Team Nutrition Resource, the *CACFP Menu Planning Guide*. It adds a variety of vegetables to a well-liked and kid-friendly food, pasta!

Ingredients:

- 8 cups bowtie pasta
- 6 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 cups corn kernels, yellow, frozen
- 1 cup edamame
- 1 cup red bell pepper, diced
- 2 cups carrots, shredded
- 1 cup parmesan cheese, grated

Directions:

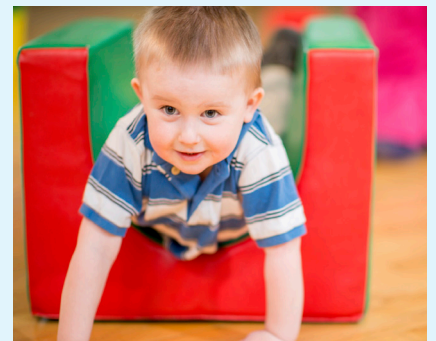
1. Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain and let cool.
2. In a large bowl, mix pasta, corn, edamame, bell peppers, and carrots.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat.
4. Add parmesan cheese and toss again.

Yield: 24, 1/2 cup servings

Obesity and Physical Activity in Children

The obesity rates for young children (ages 2-5) have significantly decreased over the past ten years from 13.9% to 8.4%. While this is good news, there is still much progress to be made. Six out of ten children (ages 2-18) do not eat the recommended number of fruits. Also, nine out of ten children do not eat enough vegetables, and one third of the vegetables eaten are white potatoes.

Most children also do not get enough physical activity. A recent study on physical activity in child care centers showed that children were active for about 48 minutes per day while the recommendation is 120 minutes. Of that, teacher-led play totaled only 10 minutes. In addition to more physical activity, teacher-led play can lead to the inclusion of more children in physical activity, role modeling, and the integration of physical activity into other educational content.



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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with Institute of Child Nutrition at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

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