

## Early Childhood Learning Centre

# Food and drinks policy

**Categories:** Health & Safety

**Last Modified:** September 2025

**Review Date:** September 2027

### Policy statement

Children's health, safety and well-being are supported at the centres.

### Rationale

To encourage and promote healthy eating habits, culturally respectful and supportive kai practices at the Centre.

### Guidelines

1. In line with Ministry of Health recommendations, the first teacher to start in the morning will flush a cup of water from all drinking taps each morning. You can read more about this from the notice released by the Christchurch City Council in 2015 here:  
<http://resources.ccc.govt.nz/files/TheCouncil/newsmedia/publicnotices/2014/20May2015PlumbosolvencyC48394.pdf>
2. Access to food and water
  - a. Children will have access to water at all times.
  - b. Teachers will provide children with regular access to food from their lunchbox.
  - c. Teachers will ensure that babies under 6 months old are held while being fed.
  - d. Teachers will ensure children on milk are either breastfed by their mothers or given milk approved by their parents. .
3. Managing allergies
  - a. Teachers will actively monitor that children with allergies do not have access to allergen foods.
  - b. If a child has eaten food that may contain allergens for another child, the area will be cleaned after meal.
  - c. Teachers will review and update food allergies with parents/whānau regularly. The Centre will put up a notice informing families of severe allergens, and update this notice as and when required.
  - d. The ECLC Under 2s Unit is a nut-free zone.
4. Kai practices

- a. Staff will ensure that tables used for kai are cleaned thoroughly before they are used for kai, and do not have activities and toys on them during kai.
- b. Children will be seated and actively supervised by teachers at kai time.
- c. Teachers will encourage safe practices around kai times (e.g., hand washing, not talking with your mouth full), Sitting facing the table, promote self-help skills when the child is developmentally ready, and support a respectful culture of eating (including karakia and no toys while eating).
- d. The Centre supports breastfeeding mothers. Mothers are welcome to come in to the centre to breastfeed, or they can send expressed milk in bottles. The teachers will consult with each family to determine how to best meet their needs. All bottled milk will be clearly labelled with the child's name, and staff will discuss storage requirements for expressed breast milk with parents. The ECLC Under 2s has an area which is comfortable for parents to either bottle-feed or breastfeed their babies. Where formula milk is supplied, staff will follow the instructions on the tin when preparing the formula for the child; such as formula discarded if unused at the time of preparing it.
- e. Bottles of milk or formula will be offered to young children but must be closely monitored to ensure that food is the main source of nourishment as the child grows.

The Centre supports and celebrates our children's milestones and cultures (birthdays, cultural festivals, and graduations). Parents are welcome to bring food that their culture uses to celebrate these occasions to share with the ECLC community.

During such occasions, teachers will check with parents the ingredients in the supplied food to ensure food meets safety criteria as set out by ECLC and MoH.

- f. The Ministry of Health (MoH) has [guidelines to reduce food-related choking in babies and young children](#). We encourage parents to seriously consider these guidelines when supplying food to be brought to the Centre (regular lunchboxes, special occasions, shared kai).
- g. Teachers will ensure that tamariki have developmentally appropriate food. Teachers will promote healthy eating and encourage healthy food. Teachers will avoid encouraging children to undereat, overeat, or emotionally eat. Food will be regularly offered, but not outside of morning tea, lunch or afternoon tea (unless a special circumstance).
- h. Communication between kaiako and whānau must be of a high level to ensure that Tamariki's needs are met for food and drink, within this setting.