EDG Nursery - Packed Lunches Policy

EYFS: 3.45, 3.46, 3.48, 3.49

At East Dulwich Grove (EDG) Nursery, we are committed to promoting healthy eating habits and providing a positive environment where children can develop an understanding of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices. We recognise that every child is unique and respect their individual dietary needs, preferences, cultural backgrounds and food choices.

While we encourage children to enjoy the nutritious meals provided by the nursery, we also recognise parents' right to choose whether to use our meal provision or provide packed lunches from home, in accordance with our nursery arrangements. This policy aims to ensure that all children receive safe, healthy and balanced meals, while supporting families in making informed food choices and promoting children's overall health and wellbeing.

1. Purpose

EDG Nursery promotes healthy, balanced eating and works in partnership with families to support children's wellbeing, development and a positive relationship with food. This policy applies where a family chooses to opt out of EDG's meal provision and provide a packed meal from home.

2. Our approach to healthy packed lunches

Packed lunches should be balanced, varied and appropriate for the child's age, stage of development, dietary needs and any allergy or medical requirements.
For children aged 2 years and over, families are encouraged to use the NHS Eatwell Guide as a helpful reference for achieving a healthy balance across the day and week. The Eatwell Guide is not designed for children under 2, who have different nutritional needs; for younger children, families should follow age-appropriate NHS guidance for babies and young children.
A balanced packed lunch should usually include:

- A starchy carbohydrate, for example bread, pitta, wrap, pasta, rice, couscous or potato.
- A source of protein, for example egg, cheese, fish, chicken, beans, lentils, chickpeas or hummus.
- Vegetables and/or salad, prepared safely for the child's age.
- Fruit, prepared safely and in an age-appropriate portion.
- A dairy food or suitable alternative where appropriate, for example yoghurt, fromage frais or cheese.
- No drink is needed: water is provided by the nursery (see section 9).

3. Foods not permitted

To support healthy eating and maintain a consistent nursery approach, packed lunches must not contain:

- Nuts or any foods containing nuts, including nut butters, nut bars, nut-based spreads, nut-containing pesto or confectionery containing nuts.
- Crisps.
- Sweets or chocolate.
- Biscuits.

Healthier puddings are welcome, for example yoghurt, fromage frais, fresh fruit or fruit in juice rather than syrup.

4. Nut-free and allergy-aware environment

EDG Nursery operates a no-nuts approach. No nuts or foods containing nuts may be brought into the nursery. Parents/carers remain responsible for checking ingredient labels before packing food.

Families must inform the nursery of any diagnosed or suspected food allergy, intolerance, cultural dietary requirement or medical diet. Where a child has an allergy or medical dietary plan, the nursery's allergy and individual care arrangements will take precedence.

5. Food safety and reheating

- EDG Nursery cannot reheat, cook or warm food brought in from home. Packed meals must therefore be suitable and safe to eat cold.
- Food should arrive in a clean, clearly named lunchbox or container. Where food requires chilled storage, an insulated lunch bag with sufficient frozen ice packs is required.
- Perishable food must be kept appropriately chilled before arrival and safely stored until mealtime.
- Food must be within its use-by date and prepared hygienically.
- Any food that appears unsafe, spoiled, unsuitable or presents an allergy risk may not be served.
- Packed lunches containing perishable food must be kept safely chilled until mealtime. Parents are required to provide food in a clean, clearly labelled insulated (thermal) lunch bag with frozen ice packs, or the packed lunch will be stored in the nursery refrigerator, where appropriate.

- All food must be maintained at a safe temperature until served, in accordance with food hygiene and safety requirements.

6. Choking safety and age-appropriate preparation

Food must be prepared in a way that is safe for the child's age and eating ability. Families should take particular care with foods that can present a choking risk.

- Grapes and similar round fruits should be cut lengthways into quarters.
- Cherry tomatoes and other round foods should be cut lengthways into quarters.
- Hard raw vegetables should be prepared appropriately for younger children.
- Bones, stones, hard pips and other obvious hazards must be removed.
- Sausages and similar foods should be cut lengthways and then into short strips. Please do not send popcorn.
- Food should be cut to a size and texture the child can manage safely.

7. Example packed lunches

Examples are illustrative only and should be adapted for the child's age, dietary needs and family preferences.

Example 1	**Example 2**	**Example 3**
Wholemeal or soft white sandwich/wrap with egg, cheese, tuna or hummus; cucumber/pepper sticks prepared safely; soft or chopped fruit; yoghurt.	Cold pasta, rice or giant couscous salad with beans, chickpeas, fish or chicken; cooked/soft vegetables; fruit; fromage frais or yoghurt.	Cold potato or pasta dish with suitable protein; vegetable pieces or salad; fruit; cheese or yoghurt.

8. Nursery snacks

Where a family opts out of the main nursery meal provision, EDG will continue to provide the nursery's usual snacks, unless an individual dietary or allergy plan requires an alternative arrangement.

9. Drinks

EDG Nursery promotes water as the standard drink throughout the nursery day. Fresh drinking water is available to children throughout the day and will be provided by the nursery.
Parents do not need to include a drink within their child's packed lunch unless this has been specifically agreed with the nursery for an individual dietary or medical reason.

Please do not send fruit juice, squash, fizzy drinks, flavoured water, milkshakes or other sweetened drinks. Children will be offered water with their packed meal and throughout the nursery day.

10. Opting out of or back into nursery meals

Families accessing funded hours may choose whether to use EDG's nursery meal provision or provide a packed meal from home.

- Parents/carers wishing to opt out of nursery meals must provide at least two weeks' written notice to EDG Management.
- The new meal arrangements will take effect from 1 November 2026, subject to the required notice period. Any food charges already invoiced for periods following the agreed opt-out date will be recalculated, and any overpayments credited to the parent's account and reflected in subsequent invoices.
- To opt back into EDG's nursery meal provision, parents/carers must provide at least two weeks' written notice.
- The two-week notice period allows EDG to update kitchen numbers, meal planning, allergy information, room records and invoicing arrangements.
- Where an urgent change is required because of a medical or allergy need, the nursery will consider this individually.

11. If a packed lunch does not meet the policy

Our first approach will always be to work in partnership with the family.
If a packed lunch contains a prohibited item, presents an allergy or choking risk, appears unsafe to serve, or is otherwise unsuitable for the child, the nursery may decide not to serve that particular item or meal.
Where this happens, staff will ensure that the child is provided with a suitable alternative meal so that no child goes without lunch. The nursery's standard daily food charge will apply for any replacement meal provided and will be added to the parent's next invoice.
Parents/carers will be informed accordingly.
If concerns about the suitability of packed lunches are repeated, a member of the management team will speak with the family and provide further guidance. The nursery will not knowingly serve food that presents a safety, allergy or choking risk.

12. Further guidance

Parents/carers are encouraged to refer to NHS guidance when planning packed meals, including the NHS Eatwell Guide, NHS guidance on young children and food, and NHS Healthier Families lunchbox ideas.

NHS Eatwell Guide:
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide
NHS: Young children and food:
https://www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/young-children-and-food-common-questions

NHS Healthier Families: https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes