

## Background

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As young children (particularly those under 12 months) are still developing their immune system, they are more susceptible to food borne illnesses and infection. This therefore makes it imperative that education and care services implement and maintain the highest level of hygiene practices. Our Service will ensure that safe practices are consistently maintained for handling, storing, preparing, and heating breast milk and formula, and sterilising bottles and teats.

## Policy statement

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This policy details the Services approach to ensuring a safe and hygienic environment is maintained for all infants and toddlers requiring a bottle, including educators' requirements in relation to sterilisation and bottle preparation in accordance with recognised guidelines and best practice. This policy applies to educators, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

## Strategies and practices

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During their first year of life, babies are at their most vulnerable to viruses, bacteria, and parasitic infections, due to their immune system not yet being fully developed. Unsafe or careless food handling practices can therefore lead to anything from a mild attack of thrush to a more serious condition of gastroenteritis, all of which are similar to food poisoning and can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, and subsequent dehydration.

- To ensure that bottles are consistently prepared in a safe and hygienic manner educators adhere to Service procedures at all times.
- Educators follow the Services written Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure when storing and heating babies' bottles.
- All staff including educators, cook, Nominated Supervisor, are aware of the procedures for sterilising bottles and teats, and preparing, heating, and storing bottles of formula and breast milk.
- The Nominated Supervisor ensures that all educators adhere to the procedures for sterilising bottles and teats, and preparing, heating, and storing bottles of formula and breast milk.
- Educators always follow all regulatory food handling and hygiene practices. These include handwashing, wearing gloves where required, ensuring children do not share bottles or use those that have been dropped. Refer to the Services Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy.
- All bottles will be stored and prepared in appropriate food preparation areas that comply with food safety standards for kitchens and food preparation areas.
- Each child's individual feeding routine is retrieved from the child's family and recorded for educators to access. This information is updated regularly to ensure each child's needs are consistently met.

## BOTTLE STORAGE AND PREPARATION

- Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the child's communication book for infants and on the daily feedback sheet for older children. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well, and all uneaten and unopened food is returned home.
- Educators receive current information on nutrition for young children, with special regard to cultural preferences.
- Infants are only provided with breast milk, formula, or cooled boiled water. They are not given fruit juice or similar beverages in their bottle due to the increase of tooth decay.
- Infants over 6 months of age are provided with small amounts of cooled boiled water in addition to breast milk or formula as required.
- Children are fed individually by educators. Children are never propped up and left to feed themselves.

### STORAGE AND PREPARATION OF BOTTLES & FORMULA

- During orientation families are informed that children's bottles must be clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Bottles and pouches containing breast milk must also be labelled with the date of expression.
- Upon arrival each day children's bottles will be checked by an educator to ensure they are clean, clearly labelled with the child's name and where required date of preparation.
- Children's bottles will not be sterilized at the Service. Families must provide an appropriate number of sterilized bottles for their child each day.
- Children's formula powder is to be provided pre-measured in a sterile formula storage container labelled with the child's name. Children's bottles must be provided with the required level of cool boiled water.
- If preferred formula powder may be provided in the original tin, clearly labelled with the child's name.
- If the child is to have cow's milk provided by the Service, a sterile bottle clearly labelled with the child's name must be provided.
- Bottles are to be heated only once. Bottles that have cooled are not able to be reheated.
- Bottles are never to be microwaved. Bottles are to be heated using sterile bottle warmers, located within an appropriate food preparation area.
- Before feeding the infant, check the temperature of the milk by letting a small drop fall on the inside of your wrist.
- Any milk, formula, or breast milk, that has not been utilized is to be discarded at the end of the child's feed.

## STORAGE AND PREPARATION OF BREAST MILK

- Breast milk must be kept refrigerated or frozen if not being immediately consumed.
- Breast milk stored in a refrigerator can be stored for 3-5 days at 4°C or lower.
- Breast milk is to be stored on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator, with the label facing forwards. Breast milk should never be stored in the door of the refrigerator.
- Frozen breast milk should be stored in a separate section of the freezer and can be stored for up to 3 months at a temperature of -18°C. However, if the breast milk is stored in a freezer compartment inside of a refrigerator, it can only be stored for 2 weeks.
- Frozen breast milk can be thawed within a refrigerator if it is used within 24 hours of thawing.
- Frozen breast milk can alternatively be thawed by standing it in a container of lukewarm water, if thawed using this method the breast milk must be used immediately.
- Once breast milk has been thawed it cannot be refrozen.
- Any unused breast milk that has been thawed must be disposed of.
- Prior to preparing a child's breast milk educators must check that the breast milk is for that child and is in date. It is best practice to have a second staff member confirm these details also. This check is to be completed prior to thawing and/or preparing the breast milk to ensure breast milk is never wasted.
- When feeding a child breast milk, ensure gloves are worn throughout the routine.

## Additional safe practices for babies

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- Educators follow the Services written Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure when storing and heating babies' bottles.

## Responsibilities of parents

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- Children's bottles must be clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Bottles or pouches containing breast milk must also be labelled with the date of expression.
- Children's bottles will not be sterilized at the Service. Families must provide an appropriate number of sterilized bottles for their child each day.
- Children's formula powder is to be provided pre-measured in a sterile formula storage container labelled with the child's name.
- If preferred formula powder may be provided in the original tin, clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Communicate with Educators regularly regarding children's feeding routine.

## Procedures and forms

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- Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) – and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure

## BOTTLE STORAGE AND PREPARATION

- Bottle Receipt Register

### Links to other policies

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- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Parent Provided Policy
- Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Service Provided Policy
- Student, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

### Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

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Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
	78	Food and beverages
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

QA	2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard

### Sources

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- Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (2022)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (current as of 2024)
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018
- Queensland Health. (2024). Infant formula and feeding guide.  
<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/patient-safety/feeding>  
accessed 23 June 2025

### Further reading and useful websites

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- Children's Health Queensland. (2024). Expressing breast milk for your baby.  
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/fact-sheet-expressing-breast-milk-for-your-baby/>  
accessed 23 June 2025
- Better Health Channel. (2024). Breast milk – expressing breastmilk.  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/breastfeeding-expressing-breastmilk>  
accessed 23 June 2025
- Australian Breastfeeding Association. <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/> accessed 23 June 2025
- Department of Health. (2024). Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection>  
accessed 23 June 2025
- NHMRC. (2024). Infant Feeding Guidelines. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers> accessed 23 June 2025
- Children's Health Queensland. (2024). Formula Feeding Guide.  
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/fact-sheet-formula-feeding-guide/> accessed 23 June 2025

## BOTTLE STORAGE AND PREPARATION

### Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

### Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	9 July 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy Developed	July 2022
2	23 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed	September 2022
3	27 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Policy reviewed Resources and information added	September 2023
4	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Policy reviewed Resources and further reading accessed.	August 2024
5	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Policy reviewed Accessed sources	July 2025
6	23 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Annual review, sources and websites updated	June 2026