

# "Healthy Start: A Multi-Faceted Approach to Enhance Children's Health and Nutrition in Childcare Settings"

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## RATIONAL:

Early childhood education and care is a recommended setting to deliver healthy eating interventions as they have access to a large number of group of children. It is well known that diet during infancy and early childhood can have implications on child growth, health, and development. SDG goal 2.2 reminds that by 2030 we have to strive to “end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age...” This paper presents the intervention applied by childcare setting placed in a tertiary care hospital for employee’s children from 3 months to 36 months.

This quality improvement project explores the effectiveness of a multi-faceted approach in improving children's health within childcare settings in Pakistan. With a focus on enhancing child health and nutrition through health awareness sessions for parents and caregivers, weekly informational messages, and tailored daily diet plans, this project advances the health and well being of children in childcare settings through joint efforts, and exceeds the dissemination of information to promote change.

## METHODOLOGY:

Using a quality improvement framework, the project follows continuous cycles of planning, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. Collaborating as a team, the childcare manager, pediatric health faculty and dietician, arranged health awareness sessions that equip parents and caregivers with essential insights into nutritional requirements of infants and toddlers. Weekly messages were circulated ensuring that stakeholders remain engaged and informed about health and nutrition topics. Concurrently, the daily diet plans were developed to prioritize balanced nutrition for the children under care.

The projects aims to investigate factors influencing the successful implementation of these strategies, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improvement. Evaluation of the strategies rests on regular feedback from parents and caregivers. The team also engaged parents and caregivers in online quizzes to evaluate the knowledge of parents and childcare providers.

## RESULTS:

Parents and caregivers reported increased knowledge and confidence in applying appropriate and healthy practices for their children. Additionally, key findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the implemented strategies in early childcare settings. By discussing the role of health awareness sessions, weekly messages, and tailored dietary plans, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how these interventions collectively influence children's health outcomes. The lessons learned from this project can guide childcare centers, early years’ practitioners, leaders, and policymakers and in adapting best practices to better serve children's health and nutrition needs. This project contributes to the field of child health and nutrition within childcare contexts, emphasizing the importance of practical health promotion strategies.

## CONCLUSION:

The study highlights the significance of collaborative efforts between health professionals, parents, and caregivers, to create an environment safe and conducive to children's holistic well-being, ensuring a healthy start in the critical time of child development.

The Aga Khan University | Centre for Early Child Development  
Suggested Meal Plan for Infants and Toddlers

	6-9 months	9-15 months	16 to 24 months	24 to 36 months
<b>Early Morning</b>	• Breastmilk or infant formula	• Breastmilk or infant formula	• Milk	• Milk
<b>Breakfast</b>	• Sago dana with water • Whole egg (well cooked) • Infant cereals • Breastmilk or infant formula	• Whole egg • Infant cereals • Sago dana or suji • Cheese slices • Fresh fruits • Yogurt	• Egg or French toast • Bread slices • Cereals [like oats or sago dana or suji] • Cut fruits or vegetables • French fries or nuggets	• Egg one or French toast or sandwich • Bread slices or paratha • Cereals [like oats or sago dana or suji] • Cut fruits or vegetables • Cheese sandwich
<b>Snacks</b>				
<b>Lunch</b>	• Mashed potato • Yogurt • Mashed chicken	• Chopped vegetables (soft-cooked like beans, okra, potato, sweet potatoes or carrot) • Soft fruit (chopped banana, ripe peach or mango or quartered grapes) • Cooked rice, pasta, noodles etc. • Cooked qeema or kabab [chicken/mutton/beef or fish]	• Cooked vegetables • Lentils [dal moong or masoor] • Cooked meat item in any form • Rice in any form • Yogurt	• Vegetables and dal [in any form] • Meat items [like beef, fish and chicken] • Rice and Chapatti • Yogurt
<b>Snack</b>	• Mashed banana • Apple sauce	• 2-3 crackers or biscuits • French fries or nuggets	• Cheese sandwich • bread sticks • Cut fruits • French toast	• Dry fruits like peanuts or sunflower seeds • French fries or nuggets • Bread sticks
<b>Dinner</b>	• Rice [khichree with dal moong] • Yogurt • Mashed chicken	• Soft-cooked vegetables (green beans, okra, potato, sweet potatoes or carrot) • Soft fruit (chopped banana, ripe peach or mango or quartered grapes) • Cooked rice, pasta, noodles etc. • Cooked qeema or kabab [chicken/mutton/beef or fish]	• Cooked vegetables • Cooked meat item in any form • Rice in any form • Yogurt	• Vegetables and dal [in any form] • Meat items [like beef, fish and chicken] • Rice and Chapatti • Yogurt
<b>Bed-time</b>	• Breastmilk or infant formula	• Breastmilk or infant formula	• Milk [can add any flavor in it]	• Milk

AKU-CECD | Children's Meal Plan | Developed in collaboration with Ms. Farah Syed, Faculty NFSD and Ms. Nimira, Faculty SONAM | October 2022

Dear Silpa,  
Hope you are doing well.

Just wanted to let you know that the “Message of the Week” is a great initiative. The messages have provided me with an easy-to- follow approach to help Rafael transition from puree food to Solids. Really appreciate your efforts. I look forward to it every Monday

Regards,

Sumaira Lokhandwala  
Assistant Manager, Alumni Engagement  
Dean's Office, Medical College

Dear Silpa ,

I feel blessed to have my child at CECD, where your team not only works to nurture the child, but also educates parents weekly through Message of the Week. It is very helpful for me to know how I can prepare and start feeding everyday to my child .

I appreciate and thank you again for your messages, I hope to know more for you.

Regards,

Azfar's Mother.

Centre for Early Child Development

**MESSAGE OF THE WEEK | SEPTEMBER 26 , 2022**

**Health and Nutrition**  
Introduction to Solid Food



**Finger food like crackers, raw fruit, or vegetable can be introduced at 6 to 7 months. It is usually given to soothe the teething process.**

شکر فوڈ جیسے کرکریں، کچے پھل یا بیجزی 6 سے 7 ماہ میں متعارف کروائی جاسکتی ہے۔ یہ عام طور پر دانت نکلنے کے عمل کو پرسکون کرنے کے لیے دیا جاتا ہے۔



Contributed by: Nimira Asif - AKU SONAM Faculty  
Picture Credit: Sara Tariq - AKU CECD Staff

Hockenberry, J. M., Wilson, D., & Rodgers, C. (2017). Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing (10th ed). Elsevier: Mosby

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Centre for Early Child Development

**MESSAGE OF THE WEEK | AUGUST 22 , 2022**

**Health and Nutrition**  
Introduction to Solid Food



**Introduce solid food with a small amount and avoid overfeeding your child. This will help in developing children's likeness to the food.**

تھوڑی مقدار میں ٹھوس خوراک متعارف کروائیں اور اپنے بچے کو ضرورت سے زیادہ کھانا کھلانے سے گریز کریں۔ اس سے بچوں کی خوراک سے مشابہت پیدا کرنے میں مدد ملے گی۔



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Illustrated by: Nighat Iftikhar - AKU CECD Staff

Hockenberry, J. M., Wilson, D., & Rodgers, C. (2017). Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing (10th ed). Elsevier: Mosby