

WEST VIRGINIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROVIDER
QUARTERLY



**Everyone Wins with
the Family Child Care Food Program**

Start Small and Watch it Grow

Tiny Teeth, Big Milestones

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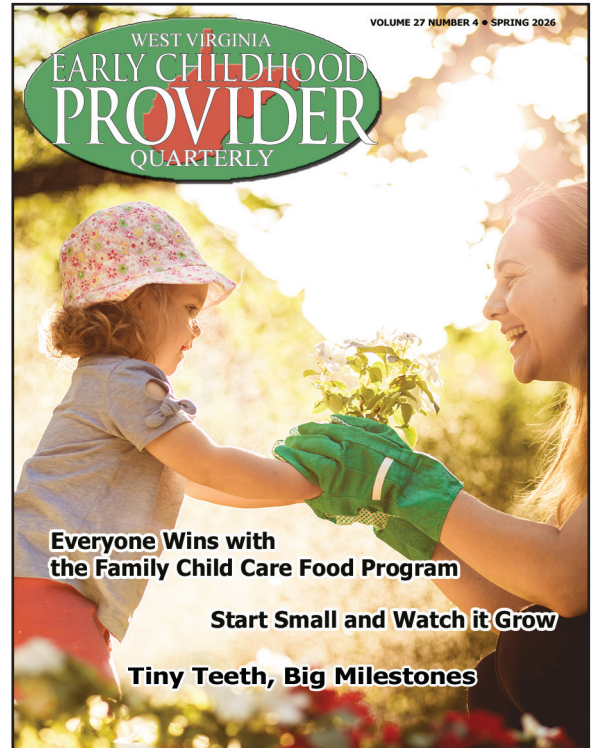
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Everyone Wins with the Family Child Care Food Program

Submitted by Yvonne Black, Executive Director, Central Child Care of WV, Inc.

Family Child Care Providers often ask what is the Food Program (CACFP) and how will this program benefit them. It is an easy answer; everyone wins with provider participation:

- Children win because they are eating nutritious snacks and meals in a safe and healthy environment. Children are eligible to be on the CACFP (Food Program) until they reach their 13th birthday.
- Parents win because they will know their child is receiving nutritious snacks and meals in a safe and healthy environment.
- Child care providers win because they receive a monthly reimbursement check to offset the costs associated with serving nutritious meals and snacks to the children in their care. Many providers are also able to claim their own children if income requirements are met. For instance, during this fiscal year (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026), providers receive up to \$7.40



per child per day (if claiming lunch, snack, and dinner).

What is the CACFP?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program administered by state agencies. In West Virginia, it is administered locally by the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Child Nutrition and local sponsoring organizations.

A Brief History

In 1968, Congress amended the National School Lunch Act to reach children in child care programs known as Special Food Services Program for Children. It was made permanent by Congress in 1978 and renamed the Child Care Food Program (CCFP). In 1989, it was further expanded to include Adult Day Care Facilities and officially became the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) as it

is known today. In 1998, it expanded to include At Risk Afterschool programs and Homeless Shelters. In 2016, new meal patterns were announced and it was the first time since 1968 that major changes were made to meal requirements. In 2018, 50 years after it began, the CACFP served over four million children every day!

What does a typical menu of a Family Daycare Home look like?

Breakfast: Consists of 3 meal components (a grain, a fruit or vegetable, and age-appropriate milk).

1. Whole grain toast/Peaches/Milk
2. Cold or Hot Cereal/Strawberries/Milk

Snack: Consists of any 2 different meal components

1. Cheese and Crackers
2. Pretzels and Milk

Lunch or Dinner: Consists of all 5 components, a meat or meat alternative, a grain, a vegetable, fruit, and age-appropriate milk.

1. Grilled Cheese Sandwich (meat alternative and grain), Tomato Soup (Vegetable), Applesauce (Fruit), Age-Appropriate Milk
2. Baked Chicken (Meat), Whole Wheat Roll (Grain), Mashed Potatoes (Vegetable), Fruit Cocktail (Fruit), Age-appropriate Milk

What is required for participation in the Family Daycare Home Food Program?

- If you are providing care to at least one non-resident child and feeding the child, you qualify for participation.
- You must have a current Certificate to provide child care in your home from the West Virginia Department of Human Services. You can be registered as a Family Child Care Home provider caring for up to 6 children at a time or a Family Child Care Facility caring for up to 12 children.
- You do not have to receive payment from your in-home daycare – just have a valid Certificate in good standing. This is a wonderful program for relatives providing child care.
- Plan, prepare, and serve meals and snacks that meet USDA guidelines in your home. Your Sponsor will provide sample menus, and ongoing assistance to ensure your success in the program.
- Your Sponsor will train and guide you through all the processes associated with participation. There is no cost

to you to be on the Food Program.

- Keep accurate records such as daily meals and attendance at each meal, and daily menus. These records will be submitted in the manner your sponsor requires. For instance, Central Child Care of WV requires Providers to use KidKare (free to Providers) which is a very user-friendly app that can be used on any computer or smart phone.
- Ongoing compliance: Attend required trainings, participate in sponsor reviews/monitoring, and update records as needed.



For more information and to begin participating in the Family Daycare Home Food Program, contact the sponsor listed below for your county.

For Cabell, Mason, Lincoln, Wayne, Mingo, and Putnam counties, contact:

Tammy Leonard, Director
Family Child Care Food Program
River Valley Child Development Services
611 7th Avenue, Suite 201, Huntington, WV 25701
Phone: 304-751-5253
Email: tleonard@rvcds.org

For Wyoming, Mingo, and McDowell Counties, contact:

Ida Monroe, Coordinator
Family Child Care Food Program
Council of the Southern Mountains
148 McDowell Street, Welch, WV 24801
Phone: 304-436-6800 ext. 253
Email: ismonroe@yahoo.com

For Jackson, Wood, Pleasants, Tyler, Doddridge, Ritchie, Wirt, Gilmer, Calhoun, and Roane, contact:

Shayla McGuire, Program Coordinator
Community Resources
1037 Market Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101
Phone: 304-485-5525 ext. 118
Email: smcguire@cricap.org

For Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, and Summers Counties, contact:

Michelle Buchanon, Director
Family Daycare Food Program
Community Action of South Eastern West Virginia
355 Bluefield Avenue, Bluefield, WV 24701
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For Boone, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, Logan, Nicholas, and Putnam Counties, contact:

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Food Allergy Alert



West Virginia Child Care
Nurse Health Consultants

A program of River Valley Child Development Services

REACTIONS AT SCHOOL

1 in 6 children with food allergies has an allergic reaction while at school.

CDC voluntary guidelines for managing Food Allergies in Schools and ECE Programs, 2015



FOOD ALLERGY SYMPTOMS

- Rash, hives, itchy skin
- Eczema and dermatitis
- Redness and Inflammation
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pains and pressure
- Anaphylaxis-severe and life threatening allergic reaction

FOOD INTOLERANCE SYMPTOMS

- Acne
- Inflammation, redness
- Dry skin
- Gas, cramps, bloating
- Heartburn
- Headaches
- Irritability and mood swings

TOP 9 FOOD ALLERGENS

- Dairy
- Egg
- Soy
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Treenuts
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Sesame

Adapted from the WV Child Care Nurse Health Consultants All About Allergies Training

Let Us Make Snacking Healthy and Fun!

Submitted by Chrissy Lafferty, MS, IMH-E, West Virginia Child Care Health Educator



Childhood obesity rates continue to rise. One way to help combat this health risk is by providing healthier food options for our children. Children learn eating habits at an early age. **YOU**, as a childcare provider, have an impact on constructing a child's eating habits. Let's make that impact a positive one! This article will provide information to help make that positive impact. In this article, we explore childhood obesity rates, the benefits of providing healthy snacks, snack guidelines for childcare settings, and provide some tricks and tips to get children to try new food.

Obesity

According to the CDC, from 2017 to March 2020, approximately 14.7 million U.S children aged 2-19 had obesity, which averages out to 19.7 percent. The most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) found that from August 2021 to August 2023, approximately 15.5 million U.S. youths aged 2-19 years had obesity, which averages out to 21.1 percent. That's an increase of **800,000** children. The study found that 1 in 8 children aged 2-5 and 1 in 5 children aged 6-11 were obese. Are you wondering where our state ranked? West Virginia ranked #2 with the highest obesity rate of 24.1 percent.

One reason for the obesity rate is the foods that children are consuming. When it comes to snacking, unhealthy temptation surrounds us daily. Chips, snack cakes, cookies, soda, these unhealthy snacks are high in sugar, salt, fat, and empty calories. Overindulging in these types of foods can lead to obesity. Healthy snacks are best!

Benefits of healthy snacks

Providing healthy snacks is one way to help prevent obesity. When children's snacks are healthy, they eat fewer calories and get more of the nutrients their bodies need because healthy snacks are low in calories and are nutrient dense. This is one way that healthy snacks help prevent obesity. Healthy snacking also helps keep hunger at bay, which helps prevent overeating at mealtimes. This is another way healthy snacking helps reduce obesity.

Children's stomachs are smaller than adults', and therefore they get full quicker during mealtimes; because of this, children are less likely to meet the suggested nutritional intake that their bodies need. Offering a variety of nutrient-dense foods at snack time, including whole

grains, fruits and vegetables, and meat/meat alternatives, can help promote good nutrition and help children get the nutrients their bodies need. Did you know that most children do not eat the recommended number of fruits and vegetables? Snack time is a wonderful time to help children get in the recommended amounts.

Healthy snacks also help children academically. Why? Think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Snacking helps meet the physiological need for food. Healthy snacks help children maintain energy throughout the day, be more attentive, stay focused, and improve concentration.

Keep in mind, healthy snacks should be low in sugar, fat, and salt. Healthy snacks include fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins, and dairy. When snacks provide protein and fiber, they will help us stay full longer.

Follow guidelines!

It is important to follow proper guidelines when it comes to snacks. WV Child Care Licensing Regulation 16.1. states that *"A center shall have a nutrition program that provides children with meals and snacks that are consistent with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Meal, and Snack Patterns."* According to CACFP guidelines, a snack must have two of the following five components: Milk (fluid), Vegetable, Fruit, Grain, Meat/Meat Alternative. Correct serving sizes are listed below:

Meal components and food items	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Fluid, Milk	4 fl. oz	4 fl. oz	8 fl. oz
Meats/meat alternates	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent
Vegetables	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup
Fruits	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup
Grains	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent

Examples of meat alternatives:

Almond butter, nuts, cottage cheese, chickpeas, yogurt, pumpkin seeds, soybeans, sunflower seed butter, sunflower seeds, tempeh, tofu, lentils, eggs, kidney beans, and natural cheese

Examples of whole grains:

brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, hominy, millet, muesli, oatmeal, quinoa, rolled oats, whole grain cereal flakes, whole grain breads, whole grain crackers, and whole grain pasta.

How often should snacks be given? That depends! According to Caring for Our Children, if children are in care for 8 hours or less in one day and are offered one meal, then two snacks should be given. If children are offered two meals, then one snack should be given. If children

are not offered breakfast on-site, then a nutritious snack should be offered midmorning, within 3 hours of lunch. Children should not go for more than 3 hours without eating unless they are asleep.

When it comes to snacks, make sure to follow guidelines regarding food allergies and choking hazards. Follow your program’s guidelines regarding any food allergies. If you work with children under the age of four, it is important to consider choking hazards. Foods that are hard, round, slippery, and big are choking hazards. So, make sure the food served is appropriate to the child's development, and is cut to the appropriate size before serving.

Healthy Snacking Tips and Tricks

Do you have any fussy eaters in your classroom? I’m sure if you have been in this field for a while, you answered yes. Some tips and tricks to get children to try new foods include giving power and control, introducing new food one at a time, letting children help, and making it fun.

Children like to have some power and control. So, give them that. Give them choices and let them decide. Just make sure the choices are healthy options. For example, “Would you like to have a banana or some strawberries with your yogurt?”

Introduce one new food at a time. Try pairing unfamiliar food with a favorite or familiar food. If the food looks similar or has the same texture, this may help as well. For example, if the children in your classroom seem to really like cantaloupe, try serving some ripe honeydew melon with it. If they like zucchini, try cutting up some seedless cucumber; serve it together.

If children are developmentally ready, let them help you prepare the snack. If it is a snack that each child can prepare for themselves, encourage them to use their senses and explore the food. Children will be more interested in trying something new if they have a part in putting it together. Here is a recipe that children could prepare for themselves.



Fruit and Yogurt Parfait

Yogurt- any flavor (try something new)

Fresh or frozen fruit, chopped (try something new)

Granola

Place the ingredients at the child’s level with three different spoons. Let the child layer ingredients.

Be creative! Make it fun! When snacks are creative and fun, children are more likely to try them. One way to make healthy snacking fun is to give snacks fun and creative names. For example, instead of saying “red peppers,” why not say “fiery red peppers”? Other examples include gooey guacamole, kooky kiwi cups, sunburst oranges, mighty melons, x-ray vision carrots, and grand slam subs. Instead of “Here’s your milk,” switch it up and say, “I have an amazing drink for you today. Can anyone guess what it is? It is Superhero Milk because it helps our bones stay strong” (make sure to annotate your voice!).

Another way to make snacks fun is to change their appearance. You can use cookie cutters to cut food into fun shapes. You can also arrange the food in different ways. Check out this recipe for a unique way to make a plain, boring bowl of oatmeal into a fun, creative owl.



Oatmeal Owls

Oatmeal

Banana, Strawberry, Blueberries

Almonds

Cut a banana to make the owl’s eyes. Place a blueberry on each eye. Cut a strawberry in half to make wings. Use an almond for the nose and almond slivers for the body.

<https://www.mylittlemoppet.com/easy-fun-foods-for-kids/>

Children enjoy ‘Lunchables,’ so why not make your own? Try the recipe below.

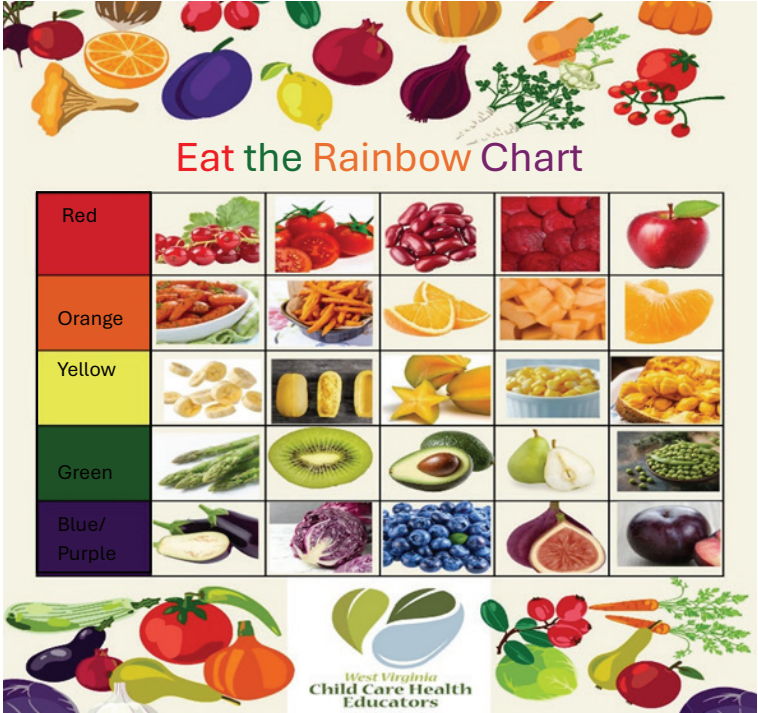


- Chicken breast, cooked, skinless, ¼ inch diced.
- Colby cheese, ¼ inch diced (or shredded for children under four to help prevent choking)
- Seedless grapes halved or cut smaller to help prevent choking.

Layer the chicken and cheese. Top with grapes.

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SnackPlanner.pdf>

A USDA best practice is to serve a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required components of a snack each day (CACFP, 2024). Have fun with this. Make it a game! Challenge the children to “eat the rainbow.” Take a picture of each color they try, and document it on a chart (see the example below). See how many colors they can eat!



Eat the Rainbow Chart

Color	Examples
Red	Currants, tomatoes, kidney beans, beets, apples
Orange	Carrots, sweet potatoes (make it fun, turn them into fries), oranges, cantaloupe, tangerines.
Yellow	Bananas, butternut squash, star fruit, corn, dragon fruit
Green	Asparagus, kiwi, avocado, pears, peas
Blue/Purple	Eggplant, cabbage, blueberries, figs, plums

Fruits and Vegetables

Red- Currants, tomatoes, kidney beans, beets, apples

Orange- Carrots, sweet potatoes (make it fun, turn them into fries), oranges, cantaloupe, tangerines.

Yellow- Bananas, butternut squash, star fruit, corn, dragon fruit

Green- Asparagus, kiwi, avocado, pears, peas

Blue/purple- Eggplant, cabbage, blueberries, figs, plums

West Virginia Child Care Health Educators

Most children love to dip their food. Here are a healthy dip recipe and a fun twist on making tortillas.

Savory Yogurt-Hummus Dip with Whole Wheat Tortillas

Yogurt-Hummus Dip	Whole Wheat Tortillas
<p>2 1/2 cups garbanzo beans, low sodium, canned. 1tsp garlic powder 2 tsp lemon juice 2 Tbsp vegetable oil 1 tsp cumin ¼ tsp black pepper ¼ cup Greek yogurt, plain, non-fat</p> <p>In a blender or food processor, combine garbanzo beans, garlic powder, lemon juice, vegetable oil, water or bean liquid, cumin, black pepper, and yogurt. Blend until smooth. Add additional water or liquid if needed.</p> <p>https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SnackPlanner.pdf</p>	<p>Whole Wheat Tortillas Cooking Spray Salt</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. 2. Use cookie cutters to cut shapes out of tortillas. 3. Arrange cut-outs on cookie sheet in one layer. Lightly coat with cooking spray and sprinkle with salt. 4. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes. <p>https://www.food.com/recipe/homemade-tortilla-chips-164852</p>

If you would like more healthy snack ideas, reach out to your West Virginia Child Care Health Educator. Harmony Vance-Tissenbaum serves the state's southern child care resource and referral regions of Link, Connect, and Mountain Heart South and can be reached by emailing hvance@rvcds.org. Chrissy Lafferty serves the state's northern child care resource and referral regions of CCRC, Choices, and Mountain Heart North and can be reached by emailing clafferty@rvcds.org.

You can also find more ideas by checking out the following resources:

- The ICN resource, Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers, features cycle menus, including snack ideas and a variety of USDA-standardized recipes.

https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/cycle_menus_for_child_care_preschoolers.pdf

- Snack Inspiration, a resource from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, provides 240 snack ideas pairing the five meal components.

https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/snack_inspiration.pdf

- Snacks That Count: Recipes for Nutritious Snacks from the Texas Department of

Agriculture includes easy recipes that include CACFP crediting information.

https://squaremeals.org/Portals/8/files/CACFP%20Resources/CACFP%20Snacks%20That%20Count%20Booklet_Update.pdf

- The USDA Snack Menu Planner, Let's Make a Snack, includes nutrition education, sample menus, standardized recipes, and CACFP crediting information. [https://fns-](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SnackPlanner.pdf)

[prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SnackPlanner.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SnackPlanner.pdf)

Closing

As a childcare provider, you already wear so many hats. You play a significant role in constructing the lives of every child that you care for. Hopefully, this article provides you with some additional tools to put in your tool belt to help construct the child's life more healthily. Thanks for all you do!

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Fun in the Sun!

Submitted by Lisa Galford, MSN, RN, Child Care Nurse Health Consultant

After being cooped up all winter and a good bit of spring, children and adults love to get outside and breathe the fresh air. The warm sun not only brightens the days but brightens your mood as well. You don't have to be laying on the beach to get into trouble with dangerous UV rays. Sun burns can cause both short-term and long-term damage. There are many things we can do to protect the skin while you're out having fun in the sun.

Staying in the shade is one way of protecting skin from harmful rays. Wearing a wide brim hat and sunglasses will help if there's no shade in sight. Long sleeve shirts and pants made of light material can protect your skin and keep you cool. Stay out of the direct sun between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. That is when the sun's rays

are most potent and damaging (Sunscreen FAQs, n.d.).

When choosing a sunscreen, make sure it is a broad spectrum (covers both UVA and UVB rays). The SPF should be at least 15. You will also need to check for an expiration date. Get familiar with reading the sunscreen label. The label gives you important information just like a food label does. Included will be a list of ingredients, directions for how often to apply, warnings, and any special directions. Keep in mind that no sunscreen is waterproof, but you can purchase water resistant sunscreens. Discard your sunscreen if you notice a change in color or smell. You'll also want to keep the container out of direct sunlight for the best results (Korioth, 2013). Children love to have fun in the sun. Outdoor activities

allow their bodies to get needed exercise and gives them a chance to use their "outside voices." Having fun in the sun should always include protecting their skin from damage that causes burns, aging, and skin cancer. Skin was meant to last a lifetime. Let's do all we can to protect it.

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West Virginia
Child Care Health
Educators

MEALTIME

SAFETY

COMMON FOODS THAT POSE A CHOKING RISK

- Hard Candy
- Nuts and Seeds
- Chewing Gum
- Popcorn
- Chips
- Marshmallows
- Whole Grapes
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Tough Meat
- Round Slices of Hot Dogs or Sausage
- Carrot Sticks or Baby Carrots
- Large Cuts of Raw Fruits or Vegetables

CHOKING PREVENTION

- Make sure the children are sitting and eating at the table
- Cut food into small ½ inch pieces
- Slice hotdogs/sausage lengthwise
- Cut meat and chicken into small pieces
- Slice grapes, tomatoes and other round foods
- Spread peanut butter thinly on crackers
- Cook or steam vegetables to soften their texture
- Offer plenty of liquids during mealtime
- Model safe eating habits and chew food thoroughly



Start Small and Watch it Grow!

Submitted by Harmony Vance-Tissenbaum, West Virginia Child Care Health Educator



You have decided to take on the task of planting a garden, but now your head is filled with questions. When should I take on this task, where are my plants going to live, what am I going to plant, and why am I doing this in the first place? Slow down! Take a deep breath and let's start small. Gardening can provide a way for children to explore and learn about their food and where it comes from in an environment that builds anticipation, patience, belonging, community, and a respect for growing things. These learning opportunities can be exciting not only for the student but also for the teacher; however,

they can also seem daunting. Especially if you have never grown anything before. So, let's break it down into a simple what, when, where, and why (just not in that order). Hopefully, this will help to give you a jumping off point or some tips to improve the gardens you already have.

“Incorporating gardening into early care and learning settings is a powerful strategy to support lifelong healthy eating habits and help young children learn to care for living things” (The National Wildlife Federation). There are many learning opportunities in differ-

ent areas from new vocabulary to math and biology. As students explore and learn through the different processes of gardening they get introduced to different textures and can be encouraged to explore their senses in a new way. With every step of the process, they get to see more of how plants grow, building the anticipation for the moment they finally get to taste the fruit of their labor encouraging them to try things they may have never been interested in before. “Hands-on gardening with young children tunes their taste buds to fresh fruit and vegetables and the enjoyment of healthy eating early

in life” (Natural Learning Institute). Tending to their plants can also help to build a sense of responsibility and belonging in the classroom environment. As their curiosity is peaked you may even find opportunities to pull in other lessons like weather, cloud studies, and worm/bug investigations just to name a few. All the while helping children to build a love for the outdoors and an understanding of where food comes from.

When thinking about your garden, it is important to know where your plants are going to go. Placement can impact choices like what and how much to plant. You will need to pick a place to garden that functions with your center.

First let’s consider the different types of gardens:

- **In-Ground** – Planting directly into the ground. This is typically the most labor intensive and requires the most space.

- **Raised Bed** – Plants are grown in raised beds. Raised beds usually are less labor intensive than in-ground gardens due to less weeds and not being ground level. They have a longer growing season as the dirt warms faster.

- **Container** – Plants are grown in containers. This helps to eliminate most weeds and is more controlled since plants can be moved around. However, they typically produce less.

- **Indoor Garden** – Plants are grown indoors in pots and typically require a good light or a growing lamp. This can be helpful with short growing seasons and can be paired with the other garden types by starting seeds indoors.

Space may be a big part of the equation for picking your garden type. In-ground and raised gardens require the squarest footage and therefore can impact your outdoor space. You may need to refer to WV Child Care licensing section

12.3 to determine if this impacts your outdoor counts. If space is a concern, you may want to use container or indoor garden options. Container gardens are also moveable. You can adjust your plants to be indoors or out, as well as, in high sun or shade if needed. They also typically require less work as these do not need to be weeded. It is also important to think about how much produce you want to yield as container gardens tend to have lower yield rates in comparison to in-ground or raised bed options. If you want a high yield garden, then you may want to look into in-ground or raised beds. Lastly, you want to think about materials you have available to you. For container gardens you would need food-grade containers with proper drainage and dirt. These containers should be something that can be cleaned and sanitized and should have never held a food allergen previously. A raised bed would need materials to build the bed and lots of fill dirt. While gath-

Easy to grow from seed	Difficult to grow from seed
Leaf Lettuce Spinach Basil and Cilantro Carrots Peas/Green Beans	Head Lettuce Eggplant Celery Peppers Cabbage

ering materials for a raised bed you want to avoid pressure treated lumber, used tires, and railroad ties as these can leach toxins into your plants. An in-ground bed may need larger equipment like a tiller to prepare the ground and is typically going to be the most time consuming with set-up and constant care. Keep in mind you don't have to go all out the first time or even the tenth time you plant something. You can start small with a container and some green bean seeds, and watch it grow and prosper. The goal is to pick something that feels manageable to you.

Once you have your space prepared let's think of when you should start planting. Starting with seeds will allow your students to see the entire growing process. It is also more cost effective to purchase

seeds and will often provide you with more variety to choose from. You will want to pick seeds that are from reputable brands as this will help your germination rates. You may even find seed packets that can guarantee germination. "Seed packets should state when to plant the seeds, depending on which region in the United States they will be sown. Directions should include planting depth, spacing, light exposure requirements, whether or not the seeds should be planted indoors prior to planting outdoors, and basic directions for the care of the plant" (Penn State Extension). Seed packets will also have a sale by date or expiration on the back; however, you are often able to plant them after this date and still have a prosperous harvest. "Most vegetable seeds will remain viable for several years when stored

in a cool, dry location. If properly stored, cabbage, broccoli, cucumber, squash, watermelon, eggplant, and radish seeds will remain viable for 5 years. Snap beans, carrot, pea, pepper, tomato, cauliflower, and pumpkin seeds can be stored for 3 to 4 years. Seeds of sweet corn and onion remain viable for only 1 to 2 years" (Iowa State University). Planting from seed will take a few more weeks than starting from small plants and you may have to start indoors if you have a shorter growing season. Typically, the rule of thumb is to wait until there is no fear of frost to plant outdoors. There are many different resources to help you determine when to plant outdoors, but a common one is *The Old Farmer's Almanac* which can be found online and in most big box stores.

If you know your growing season, how much space you have and whether you are starting from seed or small plants then you are ready to pick what you want to grow. Some plants are harder to grow from seeds than others, while others are relatively easy to start from seed. The goal of planting is to see something grow so you may want to pick a seed that has a higher rate of success to not discourage you or your students. If starting from seed is intimidating, you can also pick small plants from nurseries or big box stores to start your garden.



The age of your students may also impact your decision. Some plants like cherry tomatoes or beans could be a choking hazard and you may want to avoid them for younger children that place everything in their mouths. You also may want to consider avoiding tomatoes and other nightshade plants like peppers and eggplant since parts of these plants contain solanine which is a toxin that prevents pests. If you have children who might try to eat leaves or unripen fruit, it could cause them to get sick. Some other plants to avoid would be rhubarb, jicama, and potatoes for similar reasons. Picking your plants can be a lot of fun and it can be a great way to incorporate students and parents into the classroom.

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Gardening can be so much fun and a great way to get outdoors and learn. Knowing the basics of where, when, why, and what to plant before you start can help set you up for success. When starting there can be a lot of steps and decisions to make, but there are lots of resources available to you.

- West Virginia Child Care Health Educators www.wvyearlychildhood.org
- Grow It! Try It! Like It! <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-homes>
- WVU Extension/Gardening <https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening>
- West Virginia 4-H <https://extension.wvu.edu/youth-family/4h>
- Natural Learning Initiative <https://naturalearning.org/gardening-series>

You may even find more resources by contacting local Florist, Gardening Clubs, Farmer's Markets, and parents of students. Starting small with one or two plants can be a great starting point. The goal is to create gardening opportunities that are exciting and encouraging for the students and the teacher. Start small and watch it grow!

Do you know a child who is not *moving *hearing *seeing * learning or *talking like others their age?

By 3 months,
Does your baby...

- grasp rattle or finger?
- hold up his/her head well?
- make cooing sounds?
- smile when talked to?

By 6 months,
Does your baby...

- play with own hands/feet?
- roll over?
- turn his/her head towards sound?
- holds head up/looks around without support?

By 9 months,
Does your baby...

- sit alone or with minimal support?
- pick up small objects with thumb and fingers?
- move toy from hand to hand?

By 12 months,
Does your baby...

- wave goodbye?
- play with toys in different ways?
- feed self with finger foods?
- begin to pull up and stand?
- begin to take steps?

By 18 months,
Does your baby...

- cling to caretaker in new situations?
- try to talk and repeat words?
- walk without support?

By 24 months,
Does your baby...

- point to body parts?
- walk, run, climb without help?
- get along with other children?
- use 2 or 3 word sentences?

If you are concerned about your child's development, get help early.

Every child deserves a great start.

WV Birth to Three supports families to help their children grow and learn.

To learn more about the
WV Birth to Three services
in your area, please call:

1-866-321-4728

Or visit www.wvdhhr.org/birth23



WV Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.

Supporting Children with Diabetes in Child Care Settings

Submitted by Candy Morgan, RN, West Virginia Child Care Health Educator

Children with diabetes have unique medical needs that require thoughtful planning, consistent monitoring, and strong communication between families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. Children with diabetes can thrive in child care environments when caregivers are informed, prepared, and supported. Caregivers play a vital role in ensuring these children remain safe, healthy, and fully included in daily activities.

Understanding Your Role

Diabetes management requires careful balance between meals, physical activity, and insulin or medication. Because many young children are not able to manage their condition independently, caregivers play a critical role in daily care. Providers must follow the child's Diabetes Medical Management Plan and work closely with families to meet each child's individual needs. Nutrition is a key part of diabetes care. Offering balanced meals that support blood sugar control—often lower in carbohydrates and higher in protein and fiber—helps maintain stability. Collaboration with families ensures meal plans meet both nutritional and medical guidelines.

Activity with Confidence

Physical activity is an important part of learning and development, and children with diabetes should be encouraged to participate fully. Howev-



er, exercise can lower blood sugar levels, increasing the risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Caregivers should monitor blood sugar before, during, and after activity and be prepared to respond if levels drop.

Recognizing the signs of low blood sugar—such as shakiness, sweating, fatigue, irritability, or confusion—allows for quick intervention and prevents serious complications. Best practices during activity include:

- Checking blood sugar levels before and after physical activity
- Keeping fast-acting carbohydrates nearby, such as juice or glucose tablets
- Knowing the signs of low blood sugar and how to treat it according to the child's medical management plan
- Providing care exactly as outlined in the child's Diabetes Medical Management Plan

Daily Care Essentials

High quality care for children with diabetes includes consistency, preparation, and awareness. Child care providers should:

- Obtain and understand an individualized medical plan of care
- Monitor blood sugar as directed
- Ensure testing is done regularly
- Keep water and fast-acting snacks accessible
- Have emergency medication available at all times
- Encourage children to participate in their own care as developmentally appropriate

Partnering with Families and Health Professionals

Effective diabetes care in child care settings depends on strong partnerships. Families provide all the necessary supplies, including testing equipment, insulin, snacks, and emergency medication. They should also



provide training to ensure caregivers are prepared and confident. Providers should always follow care and intervention guidelines prescribed by the child's licensed healthcare provider. Referring to the child's Diabetes Medical Management Plan ensures appropriate treatment response. When families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals work together, children with diabetes can participate fully in daily routines while receiving the necessary support to stay healthy, safe, and engaged. For additional support or guidance, child care providers are encouraged to contact their local Child Care Nurse Health Consultant.

Helpful Resources for Child Care Providers

American Diabetes Association (ADA) can provide guidance on caring for children with diabetes in school and child care settings, including training materials and care plans.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides information on diabetes management, prevention, and public health guidelines.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) outlines best practices for health and safety in early childhood settings.

West Virginia Child Care Nurse Health Consultants offer training, consultation, and support tailored to your state.

Diabetes Medical Management Plan (DMMP) is a written plan from the child's healthcare provider outlining daily care, emergency procedures, and activity guidelines.

Source: American Diabetes Association, Tips for managing diabetes in child care settings. (2023).



Tiny Teeth, Big Milestones: Supporting Oral Development in Early Childhood

Submitted by Kelly Amos, RN

Let's take a moment to think about those tiny baby teeth we all have such special memories of – from a little one chewing on you with a brand-new tooth to the excitement on a child's face when they discover the Tooth Fairy's surprise under their pillow. These small teeth help children chew, share those heart-melting smiles, and even learn to form sounds and words. Teeth play a big role in nutrition, communication, and confidence. So, as childcare providers, how can we make sure these milestones are supported every step of the way?

First, let's talk timing.

Most babies start getting their first teeth around six to ten months. Usually, the lower central incisors pop up first.



Upper central incisors typically appear between eight and twelve months.

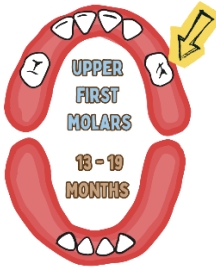
The top lateral incisors—those little teeth beside the front ones—usually between nine and thirteen months.



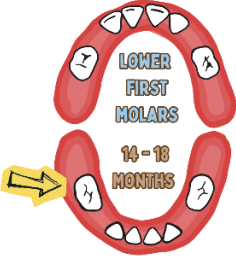
The bottom set of lateral incisors come next at 10-16 months.



The top set of first molars make their debut around thirteen to nineteen months.



Immediately followed by the bottom set of first molars at 14-18 months.



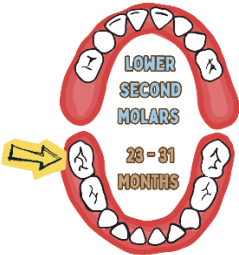
The top canines (or cuspids) between sixteen and twenty-two months.



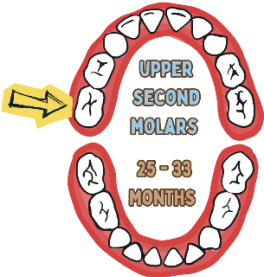
The bottom set of canines come next at seventeen to twenty-three months.



Finally, the second molars start coming in starting with the bottom set somewhere between twenty-three and thirty-one months.



The top second molars complete the primary set of teeth at twenty-five to thirty-three months. These primary teeth are also known as Baby Teeth!



(American Dental Association Foundation [ADA Foundation], 2024).

By the time a child is two to three years old, they'll likely have all twenty primary teeth in place. And then after a little break, the first permanent molars start arriving around age six, marking the beginning of the mixed dentition stage (having both baby and permanent teeth) (ADA Foundation, 2024). Of course, every child is different, so don't panic if the timeline varies—these ranges are just helpful guides.

Now, let's discuss teething. You'll probably notice drooling, lots of chewing, irritability, trouble sleeping, and maybe a slight fever (under 100.4F). These are all normal signs (American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry [AAPD], 2024). But here's something important: teething doesn't cause high fevers or severe diarrhea. If you see those symptoms, it's time for a medical check-up per the WV licensing guidelines and your protocols. For comfort, simple tricks like a chilled (not frozen) teething ring or a cold washcloth can work wonders. Just make sure that any teething toy is large, and not a choking hazard. Teething jewelry with beads should be avoided. If parents bring in teething medication that is over the counter, be sure to follow your protocols on administering medications.

1. Be sure to get Medication Authorization forms
2. Have a Medication Log to document the use of the medication
3. Follow your policies on over the counter medications, specifically when you need to obtain a doctor's order
4. Avoid all teething medications that include Benzocaine and Belladonna

What about daily care? Believe it or not, oral hygiene starts before teeth even show up. Wiping an infant's gums with a clean, damp cloth after feedings is a great start. Once that first tooth appears, brushing with a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste becomes essential. And here's a big milestone: every child should have dental care established by their first birthday (American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry [AAPD], 2024) (West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources [WV DHHR], 2024). That early connection makes a huge difference in healthy oral outcomes for children.

Let's discuss an aspect of healthy teeth that might not be the first thing that we consider. Poor oral health, including cavities, gum disease, and dental misalignment, can significantly affect speech clarity. Missing teeth or conditions that make it harder to fully close the mouth—such as an overbite, underbite, or crossbite—can change how the tongue and lips move, making certain sounds more difficult to produce (American

Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.; Colgate, n.d.). Early tooth loss can lead to speech delays and long-term language difficulties, as teeth play a crucial role in controlling airflow and providing boundaries for articulation (Colgate, n.d.; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). So, oral health can even help a child with communication and self-confidence.

Speech disorders often lead to low self-esteem and social anxiety because communication is central to social interaction. Kids who struggle with speech may feel embarrassed, avoid conversations, and hesitate to express themselves - which can result in isolation and depression. So don't forget this important aspect of oral care (Mariam, 2025).

Child care programs can really shine here. Many standards, like Head Start and WV licensing rules, encourage tooth brushing during the day and sharing health information with families. Even simple steps, such as helping kids brush after snacks or meals, can prevent cavities and set lifelong habits. Just remember to supervise brushing and keep toothbrushes from being shared. Per WV Child Care Licensing standards, each child should:

1. Have a personally labeled toothbrush with bristles in good condition, that is stored in a sanitary manner so that it does not touch another toothbrush and that its bristles are exposed to the air to dry
2. Not share his or her toothbrush with other children; and
3. Use toothpaste that is dispensed in a sanitary manner

(West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources [WV DHHR], n.d.)

And let's not forget nutrition. Sugary snacks and drinks are hard on teeth. The sugar we eat turns into acid in the mouth, which can erode tooth enamel. That's why offering tooth-friendly options and limiting sweet treats is so important. Pair this with fluoride exposure and early dental screenings for the best protection. Because accessing dental care can be challenging in some parts of WV, try connecting with others in your area to see which options they use. You might even make a difference by partnering with a pediatric dentist to visit your community once a month, or by organizing a car-pool group for dental appointments (WV Oral Health Program, 2024).

The bottom line? Every smile starts with healthy habits. By weaving oral health into your daily routines, you're giving children more than clean teeth—you're giving them

confidence, and a foundation for lifelong communication and health.

Want to see the tooth eruption chart come to life? Look for West Virginia Childcare Nurse Health Consultants on Facebook, and look at our videos to see the Tiny Teeth video of baby teeth eruption.

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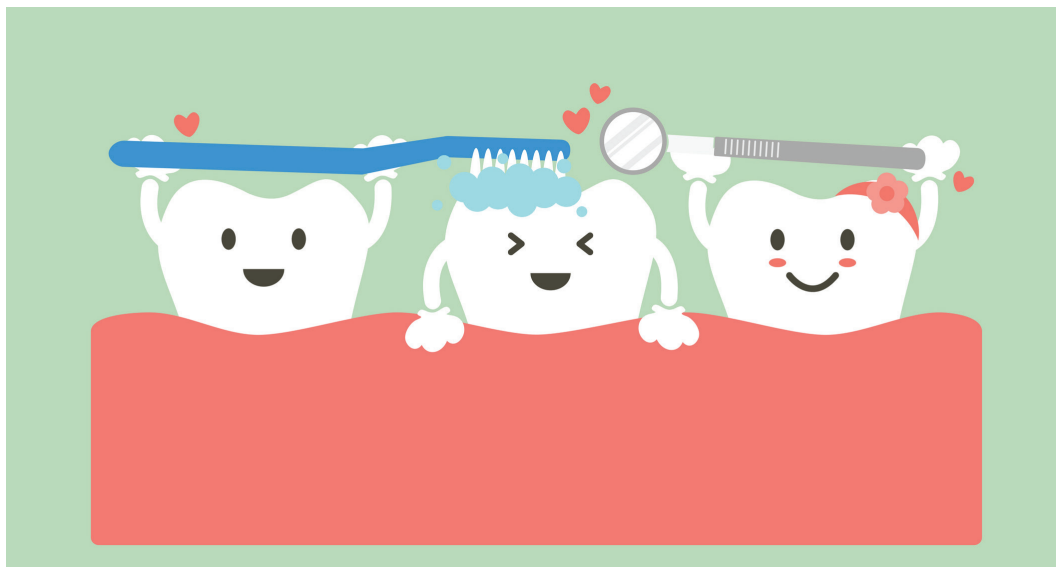
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Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"

Volume 22, Issue 2, Spring 2026

Why It's Important to Take Care of Baby Teeth

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Oral Health, www.healthychildren.org

Seeing your baby's first tooth is an exciting milestone! Most little ones will get their first (primary) teeth around 6 months of age, though tiny teeth can emerge as early as 3 months.

Did you know that cavities can develop as soon as your baby has teeth? Since baby teeth will eventually fall out, it might not seem all that important to take good care of them. But as it turns out, your child's first teeth are essential to the health of their permanent teeth—and the foundation for lifelong health.

These are just some of the reasons to

take extra-good care of your child's first (primary) teeth. Read on to learn more.

How do cavities develop in baby teeth? Cavities can form when the shiny surface of our teeth—the enamel—is harmed by common bacteria living in our mouths. The bacteria feed on sugary substances left behind from what we eat and drink. In the process, they create acids that attack tooth enamel, opening the door for tooth decay to start.

Even the natural sugars in breast milk and formula can kick-start the process of tooth decay. And even though primary teeth start falling out when kids are around 6 years old, what happens before then will influence your child's dental health over the long term. Research shows that diet and dental hygiene habits during a child's infant and toddler years reduces the risk of tooth decay as they become older.

WV Parent Blocks Newsletter is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of West Virginia Department of Human Services/Bureau for Family Assistance/Division of Early Care and Education; West Virginia Department of Human Services/Bureau for Family Assistance/WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; West Virginia Department of Health/Bureau for Public Health/Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; and West Virginia Department of Health/Bureau for Public Health/Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Home Visitation Program and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

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How to Get Your Child To Eat More Fruits and Veggies

Source Adapted from Pediatric Obesity: Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Strategies for Primary Care
www.healthychildren.org

We all know that eating fruits and vegetables is important. But how do you get kids to eat more of these foods?

Tips for Parents:

Provide fruits and vegetables as snacks. Keep fruit washed, cut up and in plain sight in the refrigerator.

Serve salads more often. Get prewashed, bagged salad at the grocery store. Teach your child what an appropriate amount of salad dressing is and how it can be ordered on the side.

Try out vegetarian recipes for spaghetti, lasagna, chili, or other foods using vegetables instead of meat.

Include at least one leafy green or yellow vegetable for vitamin A such as spinach, broccoli, winter squash, greens, or carrots each day.

Include at least one vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable, such as oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, melon, tomato, and broccoli each day.

Add a fruit or vegetable as part of every meal or snack. For example,



you could put fruit on cereal, add a piece of fruit or small salad to your child's lunch, use vegetables and dip for an after-school snack, or add a vegetable or two you want to try to the family's dinner.

Be a role model—eat more fruits and vegetables yourself.

More Things You Can Do:

Be sure your child is getting the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day. Visit choosemyplate.gov to find out how much of each food group your child should be getting.

When shopping for food, start in the area of the store where they keep fresh fruits and vegetables.


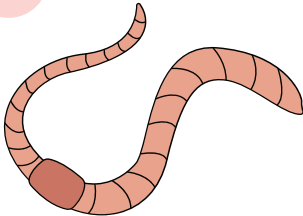










Stock up. That way you know you always have some on hand to serve your child.

Avoid buying high-calorie foods such as chips, cookies, and candy bars. Your child may not ask for these treats if they are not in sight.

Limit or eliminate how much fruit juice you give your child and make sure it is 100% juice, not juice "drinks."

Eat as a family whenever possible. Research shows that kids eat more vegetables and fruits and less fried foods and sugary drinks when they eat with the entire family.

GARDENING SCAVENGER HUNT

 <p>Plant</p>	 <p>Worm</p>	 <p>Butterfly</p>
 <p>Flower</p>	 <p>Seed</p>	 <p>Lady Bug</p>
 <p>Snail</p>	 <p>Rock</p>	 <p>Ant</p>
 <p>Watering Can</p>	 <p>Gardening Tools</p>	 <p>Gloves</p>

Planting Seeds for Healthy Eating

Benefits of Gardening

- Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption
- Nutrition Knowledge
- Adds Responsibility
- Sensory Experience
- Math, Science, and Nature
- Physical Movement
- New Words
- Teamwork

Plants to avoid with children

- ✓ Nightshades-Tomatoes, peppers, and potatoes
- ✓ Rhubarb
- ✓ Jicama
- ✓ Beans - Kidney, Lima
- ✓ Eggplant

***These plants pose a toxicity risk**

www.wvearlychildhood.org



Types of Gardens



In-ground*

Planting directly into the ground. This is typically the most labor intensive.



Raised Beds*

Grown in raised beds. Less labor due to less weeds and not being ground level. Increased growing season as the dirt warms faster.



Containers

Grown in containers. Eliminates most weeds and is more controlled since plants can be moved around. Produces less. Make sure to use food grade containers



Indoor Garden

Grown indoors in pots. Requires a good light or a growing lamp. Can help with short growing seasons.

*Check with licensing for space requirements. 12.3