**04 Food for play and cooking activities**

Some parents/carers and staff may have strong views about food being used for play. It is important to be sensitive to these issues. For example, children who are Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, or vegetarian, should not be given any food to play with that contains animal products (Gelatine). Parents/carers’ views should be sought on this. In some cases, it is not appropriate to use food for play, particularly in times of austerity.

* Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.
* Jelly (including jelly cubes) is not used for play.
* Staff are constantly alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.
* Pulses are not recommended as they can be poisonous when raw or may choke.
* Dried food that is used for play should be kept away from food used for cooking.
* Foods that are cooked and used for play, such as dough, have a limited shelf life.
* Cornflour is always mixed with water before given for play.
* Cornflower and cooked pasta are discarded after an activity; high risk of bacteria forming.
* Utensils used for play food are washed thoroughly after use.

**Children’s cooking activities**

* Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, members of staff should check for allergies and intolerances by checking children’s records.
* Children are taught basic hygiene skills such as the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food, and again after going to the toilet, blowing their nose or coughing.
* The area to be used for cooking is cleaned; a plastic tablecloth is advised.
* Children should wear aprons that are used just for cooking.
* Utensils provided are for children to use only when cooking, including chopping/rolling boards, bowls, wooden spoons, jugs, and are stored in the kitchen.
* Members of staff encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner.
* Food ready for cooking or cooling is not left uncovered.
* Food play activities are suspended during outbreaks of illness.

**Playdough and raw (uncooked flour)**

Refer to playdough risk assessment.

All flour including cornflour is raw until the point it is heated or cooked. Raw flour poses a risk of E. coli to young children and current advice is that it should not be used for play, or for uncooked playdough recipes.

If a child or member of staff is allergic to any of the ingredients they must be replaced, and a safe alternative used.

Staff have up to date information about children’s allergies or concerns about a potential allergy and these are clearly displayed.

If a younger child is likely to put the playdough/ cornflour in their mouth, a safe alternative is provided.

If a child is likely to eat the playdough due to persistent sensory seeking behaviours the activity will be replaced with a safe alternative.

Children are always supervised when playing with playdough or cornflour.

Children and staff wash their hands before and after the activity.

**Other activities with flour?**

Uncooked flour should not be used for activities where children are exploring through touch or taste, or there is a likelihood they will put their fingers in their mouths.

Baking: You can do baking activities where flour is used and then the food is cooked. You must ensure that the activity is risk assessed, and children do not eat the uncooked flour or the mixture.

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| **Making and playing with play dough Risk Assessment** | | | |
| **(1) Hazard** | **(2) Who might be harmed and how?** | **(3) What controls exist to reduce risk?** | **(4) What action can be taken to further reduce risk?** |
| Burns when using boiling water to make play dough | Staff- burns | Staff to take care when making play dough and ensure children are not close by. |  |
| Children eating playdough | Children | Children to be closely supervised whilst playing with playdough to ensure they do not eat it. If a child keeps putting the playdough in or near their mouth they must be moved away from the activity. | Children must be supervised when playing with playdough. |
| Raw flour being ingested | Children/staff  Food poisoning | Children and staff wash their hands before and after playing with play dough. | Staff wear gloves and an apron when making the play dough. |
| Contamination from flour products on equipment |  | Follow cooking, storage and handling instructions provided on the packaging.  Clean all surfaces properly - wash bowls, utensils, and surfaces with warm, soapy water or your usual surface cleaner and disinfect where necessary | Staff to be made aware of the risks. |