**Table 6.8: Final guidelines for feeding practices for children aged 2-5 years**

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 1:**  The caregiver ensures that the child receives a balanced diet that includes indigenous foods that are locally available. | A balanced diet is essential for optimal growth and development of a child. A balanced diet should include all primary food groups, such as locally available fruits and vegetables in season, such as oranges and okra, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, as well as foods like “amiable” and “rapoko.” | **Caregiver:**   * Give child locally available indigenous foods within their reach. * Dry fresh, locally available indigenous fruits, such as baobab fruit, for use when off-season. These can be stored as a powder and used as soup when water is added or added to porridge. * Bottle locally available indigenous drinks in season for use when off-season.   Utilise information available to them by health care workers on which foods to give their child.  Join nutrition garden clubs in their area.   * Parents should give their children dairy products such as goat and cow’s milk to provide fats and essential nutrients. * Provide carbohydrates from small grains like “rapoko” and “amabele” as pap or traditional fermented "Maheu" as a snack between main meals for energy. * Avoid using “Maheu” in place of milk. * Avoid giving the child commercial “Maheu” as it may predispose the child to malnutrition * For protein, offer chicken, beef, “kapenta,” or beans. * Give the child at least one fruit a day. * Provide all essential nutrients in a child’s diet. * The child should eat whole-fibre grains such as bread, pasta, and brown rice for easy digestion. |
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| **Guideline 2:**  Caregiver considers the frequency of meals when feeding their child. | The frequency of meals guarantees that the child is fed adequately and on time to ensure optimum growth. Children have small stomachs, and insufficient frequencies harm the child's health and development.  Age-specific meals ensure that children are not over- or underfed and can grow to their full potential, laying the foundation for long-term health outcomes. | **Caregiver:**   * Feed the child at least 5-6 times a day, including snacks between meals from the age of 2. * Supervise feeding frequencies to ensure adequate intake of food. * Evaluate the nutritional health of the child through weighing at health centres. * Train caregivers on the importance of feeding the child at least 5-6 times a day if they are working class to ensure the child is adequately fed throughout the day. |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 3:**  Give age-specific amounts of meals to ensure that the child is well-fed. | Age-specific amounts of meals ensure that a child is not over or under-fed. | **Caregiver:**   * Give the child the correct portion sizes of food to ensure adequate and appropriate feeding by not over-feeding or under-feeding. * Provide children with food amounts that tally with their age to ensure optimum growth. At least two in three children are not fed the minimum recommended diverse diet and quantities for healthy growth and development. * Ensure meals and amounts of food the child eats are nutritious to ensure optimal health. * Provide caregivers (if they are working class) with pictorial charts with diets and age-specific meals the child should eat daily. This will enable the carer to remember when, how and how much to feed the child. |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 4:**  Supervision of feeds allows the child enough time to feed sufficiently. | Supervising the child during meals is a vital role of the caregiver to ensure adequate feeding. | **Caregiver:**   * Supervise their child as they eat to prevent hazards such as choking. * Give the child adequate time to feed to ensure their child has eaten adequately. * Teach their child to feed themselves to develop their motor skills. * Monitor the way the child feeds to prevent hazards such as vomiting and aspiration. * Take the child to the health care centre monthly for anthropometric measurements, such as weighing, to assess whether the child is feeding well. * A food diary can be utilised to check if a child eats all the essential foods from all food groups. * Consider a daily dietary recall for the child if they are working class. The child can talk to check which foods they eat if they are away. |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 5**  Teach and allow children to feed themselves to foster feeding independence. | Teaching and allowing children to feed themselves fosters feeding independence and the development of motor skills.  The development of motor skills is essential because it is part of a child's growth. | **Caregiver:**   * Teach and encourage their child to feed themselves to foster feeding independence. * Monitor the way the child eats to prevent hazards such as choking, hot foods, wastage and contamination of food. * If available, provide and allow children to watch video cartoons of children feeding themselves to encourage them to feed themselves~~.~~ * Model healthy eating to encourage the child to eat. * Praise children when they feed themselves to do even better in the next meal. |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 6:**  Prioritising child feeding in family meals avoids cultural practices that limit child intake of nutritious foods such as eggs. | Prioritising children in family meals ensures that the child gets enough food and dispels some cultural practices that range from food for adults and food to be fed to children | **Caregiver:**   * Ensure the child is well fed before adults feed so that the child can adequately feed and be supervised in feeding. * Counsel the father about the need to feed the child first, as in some cultures, father is fed first. * First, make sure that the child gets an adequate portion of food in line with their age to ensure growth and provision of proper nutrition. * Avoid practices such as children not eating eggs, which may predispose them to malnutrition. * Give alternatives instead of eggs, such as milk, when the caregiver prefers to adhere to the practice. Giving the child eggs or an alternative as part of their meal ensures the growth and provision of proteins. |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 7:**  Elimination of non-nutritious foods and drinks from the child’s diet. | Non-nutritious foods should be limited in a child’s diet. This is because they can predispose a child to malnutrition.  Non-nutritious foods and drinks can also negatively alter a child’s preference for healthy foods, leading to malnutrition. | **Caregiver:**   * Avoid giving children non-nutritious foods such as “jiggies, ama zepi, and maputi.” * Avoid foods of high sugar content, such as “freezits” (coloured water mixed with lots of sugar that are then sold in frozen sachets), fizzy drinks like jolly juice and low-calorie “Maheu” with lots of sugar. |
| **Guideline 8:**  Healthy drinks are given after main meals as food and snacks. | Healthy drinks such as water and other nutritious beverages like Amarula fruit milkshakes are nutritious and help shape children's eating behaviours.  Snacks with high sugar and sodium content predispose a child to developing strong salt and sugar preferences later in life. They can also cause diarrhoea, which slows a child's growth and development. Snacks should come from all food groups that constitute a balanced diet. | **Caregiver:**   * Parents should provide their children with healthy drinks after meals, such as water, as it quenches thirst and is vital for nutrition and body fluids. * Avoid adding sugar to milk. * If available, offer healthy fruit juices such as watermelon and orange juice to enhance food preferences and taste. * Avoid sugary beverages like Coca-Cola, “Miranda, and jolly juice.” |

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| **Guideline** | **Rationale** | **Actions** |
| **Guideline 9:**  Role modelling of good feeding practices by caregiver at all times. | Children like to eat what they see their caregivers eat.  It can help children develop healthy eating habits as they appreciate such practices.  Creates positive feeding behaviours towards healthy foods.  Develops healthy eating styles in a child. | **Caregiver:**   * Role model good feeding practices. * Eat a variety of healthy foods in front of their children. * Avoid force-feeding as it can lead to choking. * Do not force their child to finish all the food on their plate. * Serve and eat healthy foods for their child to develop such practices. * Keep healthier food choices in the home, such as vegetables and fruits. * Keep less high-calorie sugary/sweet foods and savoury snacks at home. |
| **Guideline 10:**  Take note of the mandatory national fortification policy on processed staple foods to avoid buying nonnutritious foods | Buying foods with labels indicating the manufacturer's name, date of manufacture, expiry date, and components that may show what their child is allergic to can help caregivers avoid buying unhealthy foods and purchase foods that are still within shelf life to prevent food poisoning and malnutrition. | **Caregiver:**   * Practice vigilance when buying food * Read nutritional content on food labels before buying * Avoid buying non-fortified foods with no food labels * Avoid buying foods with high sugar content |

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| **Guideline 11:**  Implement safe food preparation practices at all times to prevent morbidity | Prevents food-borne diseases such as salmonella and shigella bacteria, which children under five years are most vulnerable to due to their immune systems, which are still developing and can manifest as diarrhoea. Diarrhoea in children of this age range has a negative impact on feeding patterns of children aged 2-5. | **Caregiver:**   * Wash hands thoroughly with soap/ash under running water before and after handling food to prevent contamination of food * Ensure a clean environment to prevent flies * Wash hands before feeding the child to avoid introducing bacteria * Clean kitchen utensils immediately after use to prevent contamination with flies, which can lead to diarrhoea * Wash the child’s hands before eating to prevent food contamination, which can lead to diarrheal diseases * Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables under running water before eating * Cook food thoroughly to kill germs |