

Playgroup Newsletter

April 2021



Lifestyle Capital of Victoria

Welcome to the monthly Playgroup Newsletter. Keep up to date with playgroup news, information about what is happening locally as well as play ideas and recipes.



This month we have information about free activities that are offered in the local community.

- ❖ Free Parenting Education Sessions
- ❖ Library Story Time
- ❖ Free Playgroup Victoria Membership

We also have articles on:

- ❖ Benefits of involving children with cooking
- ❖ Returning to work after you have had a baby
- ❖ Easter craft
- ❖ Easter cooking ideas

And of course there are some yummy recipes to try.

Expression of interest.

Are you interested in facilitating a Community Playgroup? Perhaps there isn't a playgroup running in your area and you would like to start one?

Playgroups are a great social activity for you and your child. Facilitating a playgroup is also a way of building new skills that can lead to future opportunities. Training can be provided as well as ongoing support.

For all playgroup inquiries you can contact the Playgroup Development Officer on 9293 7156 or email playgroups@frankston.vic.gov.au

Returning to work after having a baby: 15 tips

1. Make changes before you return to work

Consider your new daily routine - you can start doing this to ease the transition – for example, trialling a new child care routine or finding a back-up carer.

2. Plan your child care well ahead of time

Choose the type of child care that you think will be right for your family, and then plan how you'll settle your child into care.

3. Talk with family, friends, other carers and educators about your plans

It can help to get advice from other people. Professionals, or people who know you well - they might have helpful ideas to aid the transition.

4. Plan some food and cooking shortcuts

Freeze leftovers for future meals. Cooking websites and supermarket magazines often have quick and easy family recipes. Keep a few things in the pantry or freezer for quick simple meals when you don't have time to shop.

5. Try to leave work distractions at work

You'll want to make the most of the time you do have together. Set some boundaries around how much work you'll do at home, including limits on checking and responding to emails or phone calls.

6. Do what you can the night before

Things like laying out clothes or making lunches the night before all make the morning less of a rush.

7. Stick to a routine if you can

Family routines help children know what to expect and help them behave better too. Routines can also help you keep family life organised, which might reduce any stress you're feeling.

8. Take your child or family to work social occasions

This can be fun for you and your child and it might make it easier for your colleagues to be understanding – for example, if you have to take carers leave because your child is sick.

9. Stay briefly with your child at child care, if you can

Spending a few minutes together at the start of the session will help ease your child into the new routine and environment.

10. Build a relationship with your child's carer

This can really cut down on your stress and it also helps you keep up with what your child is doing and learning.

11. Tackle any questions or worries about your child's care quickly

If you're worrying about child care, it can be hard to concentrate at work. And talking to your child's carer regularly – not just when you have concerns – is another way to build a relationship and make it easier to tackle any worries that do come up.

12. Have a back-up carer for your child

This will really reduce pressure and worry for you. Somebody who can help out at short notice and who you trust is the key. Some options are friends, parents from playgroup, grandparents, other relatives and partners.

13. Have a back-up plan for when your child gets sick

It's pretty common for children to get sick in their early years at child care, so it's a good idea to decide what you'll do when this happens. For example, if you have a partner, can one of you change your hours or work from home for a day or so to care for your child? Or you might need to find somebody else who can help out with emergencies.

14. Plan some family time

This can be a real help if you find your work responsibilities are making it harder for your family to spend time together. For example, you could plan to go for a walk with your partner and child a couple of evenings each week.

15. Take time to relax and unwind when you can

This will help your stress levels and overall wellbeing. If you can, taking public transport to work can be a great way to have some time to yourself to read or listen to music. During your lunch break, take a walk around the park, do some window shopping, go to the gym, have coffee with a friend or read a book – whatever it takes to have some 'me time'.



<https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/work-child-care/going-back-to-work/returning-to-work-tips>

Playdough recipe

Ingredients

- 2 tbs cooking oil
- 4 tbs McKenzie's Cream of Tartar
- 2 cups plain flour
- 1 cup salt
- Food colouring of choice
- 2 cups cold water

Directions

Step 1

COOKING ON STOVE TOP: Mix all the ingredients in a saucepan and stir continuously over medium heat for 3-5 minutes, until the mixture congeals and is not sticky. Cool slightly, remove from pan and knead until smooth.

Step 2

COOKING IN MICROWAVE: Mix all ingredients well in a microwave-safe, large bowl. Microwave for 2 minutes. Carefully remove and stir well. Microwave for 1 minute and 30 seconds. Carefully remove and stir well. Microwave for 1 minute. Carefully remove and stir well. Microwave for 30 seconds. Mixture should be congealed and not sticky. Allow to cool slightly, then knead until smooth.



<https://www.mckenziefoods.com.au/recipe/playdough/>

Tips

- Makes 1 kg of play dough, enough for 4 portions.
- Store in an airtight container for up to three months.
- Add a few drops of essential oil before cooking for aromatic play dough!

Should playgroups provide playdough during COVID-19?

This is a question that is commonly asked. The recommendations for early childhood services are set out by the Department of Education and Training. Handwashing is the key for when you are using sensory activities.

One way of managing playdough at a playgroup is to offer each child an individual amount they can use then store in a container/plastic bag to take home. Please see information below from Playgroup Victoria.

Recently the Victorian Department of Education and Training provided Early Childhood services with a guide on particular activities used within their services. This advice can also be applied to the playgroup setting. They have advised the following:

Advice on sensory play - "The current health advice is that early childhood services can continue to safely engage in group sensory activities, with hand washing before and after such activities strongly recommended. There are no restrictions currently in place on the use of sandpits, digging patches, water play or playdough."

Department of Education - Early childhood education coronavirus (COVID-19) update Thursday 11 June 2020

What does this mean?

Playing at playgroup does not change.

Children are able to play and socialize with other children as they were prior to COVID-19 restrictions.



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Playgroup

Easter craft ideas

Bunny face

You will need, paper doilies, white paper, pink paper, black paper, glue and scissors.



Play Dough Easter Gift

Use the playdough recipe and add food colouring. When cooled place in glass jars and decorate with pipe cleaners felt ears and goggle eyes.



CUTE BUNNY PAPER CRAFT

- easypeasyandfun.com -



Easter Iced Biscuits.



Ingredients

For the Icing

- 1 cup of icing sugar
- 2-3 tbsp milk
- a few drops of vanilla essence
- Food colouring.

Other ingredients

- Oval and round plain biscuits
- sprinkles
- choc chips
- smarties
- licorice



Instructions

1. Mix up the icing, milk and food colouring keeping it fairly thick and stiff.
2. Place a ziplock bag into a cup for each colour of icing you want to make. Add a dollop of icing into each bag plus a few drops of colouring and mix.
3. Seal the zip lock bags and cut a tiny snip of one corner to make a piping bag. Place the bag back in the cups for easy access and to catch any drips.
4. Take an oval biscuit and use your creativity when decorating the biscuits.
5. To make the chick biscuits use a round biscuit and spread it with yellow icing. Place smarties in the centre and cut a beak from the licorice.
6. To make the bunnies, use a round biscuit and spread it with icing. Place smarties in the centre and a choc chip for a nose. Cut ears and whiskers from the licorice.



Kids in the Kitchen!

The term one holidays is a good time to do some cooking with your child/children. This can be an enjoyable activity when children are getting bored.

Did you know that children engage in a wide range of skill development during cooking activities?

Physical Development: Fine motor and eye-hand coordination skills are developing by chopping, mixing, squeezing, and spreading.

Cognitive Development: Cooking encourages children's thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. It also allows children the opportunity to use the knowledge they have and apply it by counting, measuring, following directions, and also cause and effect.

Language Development: Cooking offers the opportunity to develop language skills by linking it to all other areas, including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Arts, and Literacy. This is done by encouraging children to talk about what they are doing, counting, and watching materials change color, texture, and medium.

How to cook with kids

- Talk about the dish before you start. Show your child the ingredients and the recipe, if you're using one.
- Let your child do as much as possible. Your child could wash vegetables and fruit, pour and stir, and help with measuring and

counting. Your child could even try some easy cutting under careful supervision – for example, cutting soft fruit with a butter knife. You might need to show your child what to do first, then let your child try.

- Talk about what you're doing, and introduce words like 'grate' and 'mash'. You can also encourage your child to come up with words to describe flavours and textures, like 'salty', 'crumbly' or 'crunchy'.
- Talk about which foods are healthy and why.
- Let your child share their dish with friends or family. Praise your child's cooking and hard work!



Adapting cooking activities for kids of different ages.

A simple green salad is a good first dish for **your younger child**. Help your child wash the leaves and herbs, then let your child tear them up with their fingers. Help your child to measure and add the ingredients for the dressing, and give your child a set of spoons to mix the salad in the bowl. Written recipes are a good way for **your older child** to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Read the recipe with your child before you start. You can talk about concepts like fractions, weights and temperature.



Your local community

Maternal and Child Health at Frankston City Council has a range of free parent information sessions on a variety of topics. Including:

Foods for Baby 4 - 12 Months

As babies develop, their food options need to change to ensure optimal growth and development. Get up-to-date information on the introduction of nutritional foods for your baby.

Infant Massage 0 – 6 Months

Learn the benefits of infant massage, from strengthening the parent/infant bond to gentle techniques and strokes to safely massage your baby.

Play and Development Sessions - Sessions for Babies 0 - 6 Months or Toddlers 1 - 3 Years

Stuck for play ideas at home? Here you will learn a variety of play options and practical strategies for encouraging your child's play and development.

Sleep and Settling - Sessions for Newborn 0-3 Months, Baby 6 – 8 Months and Toddler 18 – 24 Months

Settling babies and toddlers into sleep patterns is important to their development and for family routine. Learn flexible age appropriate techniques on sleep patterns and typical age related sleep development.

Toilet Training

Learning how to use the toilet can be tricky for children and for parents. In this session, you will learn how to begin your child's toilet training journey with tips and strategies for success.

Bookings are essential - phone 9784 1756



If you are unable to attend, please phone and cancel so we can invite those on the waiting list to attend. Children over the age of six months are not able to attend these sessions.



StoryTime is back!!

Storytime encourages a love of reading and offers social interaction too. Evidence shows that reading regularly to a child gives them a head start once they reach primary school.

The big thing to know is that **you will need to book**. There won't be any walk-ins as our numbers are limited. Bookings ensure that we comply with our Covid-safe plan and the social distancing requirements of one person per two square metre rule for public libraries.

Storytime remains a great, free activity and bookings will open each Thursday morning for the week ahead.

We do ask that you arrive a few minutes early to your booked session to allow time to scan in via the QR code on display, sanitise and then find a Storytime spot for your family group.

We've missed you and look forward to seeing you in the library soon!

Please click on the link to book through Eventbrite.

https://library.frankston.vic.gov.au/Whats_On/Storytime



For Playgroups

Playgroup Registration with Playgroup Victoria is currently offering **FREE** Family Membership.

*** JOIN TODAY via the link below ***

<https://www.playgroup.org.au/become-a-member/>

Salmon Nicoise Pasta Sala

Ingredients

- 300gms of bow tie pasta or similar
- 100gms green beans (fresh or frozen)
- 4 boiled eggs
- 300gms cherry tomatoes
- 60gms baby spinach and rocket
- 400gms tinned pink salmon
- 60mls extra virgin olive oil
- 60mls lemon juice
- Optional-pitted black olives and capers



Combine cooled cooked pasta to tomato, cooked beans, spinach, rocket, cooled halved boiled eggs. Dress with olive oil and lemon and add olives and capers if desired.

This is a meal the whole family can enjoy!



Baked Potatoes

- 4 medium floury potatoes washed and dried
- ¼ green cabbage
- ¼ purple cabbage
- ¼ cup sweet corn
- 1 small carrot
- 3 tbsp low fat mayonnaise
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 2 bacon rashers finely chopped
- 4 tsp butter
- 1 cup grated cheese
- Salt and pepper



1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. With a fork, prick the potato skins a few times, then place directly onto the middle shelf of the oven. Cook the potatoes for 60 minutes or until they are tender when pierced with a knife.
2. With the kids, create the coleslaw by stirring together the cabbage, corn, carrot and mayonnaise in a medium bowl until mixed well. Set aside.
3. Heat the oil in a small fry pan over a medium heat. Add the chopped bacon and stir frequently for 4-5 minutes until brown and crispy. Remove from the pan and drain any excess oil on a paper towel.
4. When the potatoes are ready, carefully remove from the oven and transfer onto serving plates. Carefully cut each potato open and season with salt and pepper. Add a teaspoon of butter to the centre of each potato. Top with the coleslaw, cheese and a sprinkling of bacon.
5. Serve immediately and enjoy!