



Feeding Your Toddler

1-3 Years

This is an important time for your child to learn many new things about eating. Between 1 and 3 years, children continue to learn:

- to chew foods with a variety of textures
- to enjoy many different tastes
- to feed themselves, with some help
- to follow hunger and fullness cues

When you help children learn these skills, you encourage them to be healthy, happy eaters.

What to expect: toddlers may...

- Eat more on some days and less on others
- Eat less as growth slows down
- Refuse to eat new foods or change their minds about foods they ate before
- Want the same food everyday for a week
- Be easily distracted
- Play with food

INDEPENDENCE: Toddlers can continue feed themselves small, soft pieces of food using their hands, or may try a spoon or fork. Children may eat better when allowed to feed themselves.

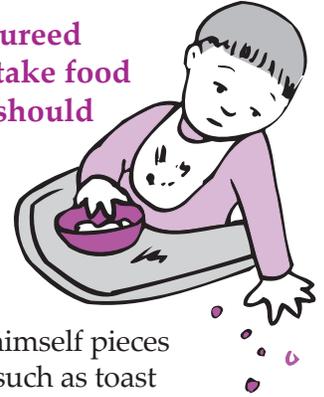
MESS: Expect a mess! Toddlers need practice to eat and learn through touching, tasting and smelling food.



REFUSING FOOD?

My child is refusing pureed foods and is trying to take food off of my plate. What should I do now?

- Your toddler is showing you that he needs a variety of textures and flavours.
- Let your toddler feed himself pieces of your family's foods such as toast pieces, cooked noodles or rice, small soft pieces of fruit or cooked vegetables, or cooked tofu, chicken or beans.



PICKY EATING?

I'm afraid my toddler will become a picky eater. What can I do to prevent this?

- Picky eating is a normal part of your child's development. Choosing one food over another is their way of showing you their independence.
- Your child may try new foods if they can taste and feel them. Offer a variety of new foods with different tastes and textures, and enjoy them yourself. Your child wants to eat what you eat.
- Avoid pressuring your child to eat. They may be more open to trying new foods if the choice is theirs. Give them many chances to explore foods.

Choking

Eating on the run can cause choking. Have your toddler sit at the table for meals and snacks to keep **them** safe. Do not give your toddler small hard candies, popcorn, raisins, whole nuts or seeds, sticky foods like marshmallows globs of nut or seed butter, gum or small hard pieces of food. Foods such as grapes and hot dogs must be cut into small pieces to avoid choking.



NOT EATING ENOUGH?

I worry that my toddler is not eating enough. What should I do?

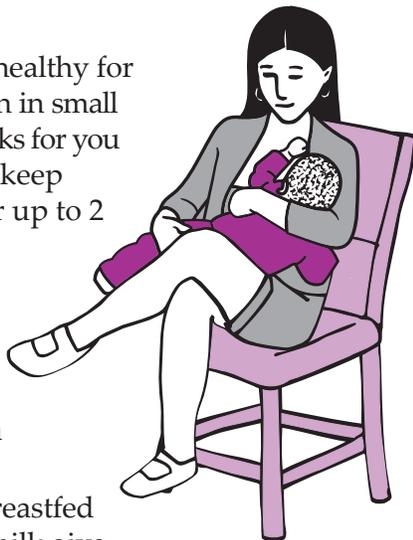
- Toddlers know when their stomach is full. It is important to let **them** decide how much to eat. Toddlers grow more slowly after the first year of life, and sometimes eat less food. They show you that they have had enough to eat when they turn their face away from food, start playing with it, or throw it on the floor!
- If they don't finish their meal, remove the food, and wait until the next meal or snack time before offering more to eat.

Setting limits

Parents need to set healthy limits for their toddler. Children at this age will begin to ask for unhealthy choices like pop or candy. Sometimes it is necessary to say a firm but gentle "no". Families should enjoy healthy choices together.

MILK

- Breastfeeding is healthy for your toddler even in small amounts. If it works for you and your toddler, keep breastfeeding for up to 2 years or longer.
- The kind of milk you give can be breast milk, whole milk (3.25% M.F.), or a mix of both.
- If your child is breastfed or not drinking milk give 400 IU Vitamin D each day.
- Do not give low fat milks such as 2%, 1% and skim milk for children under two years of age.
- Soy "milk" and other "milk" drinks (rice, almond, coconut, and potato) do not have enough fat or protein to meet a toddler's needs and should not be given before 2 years of age. Call Dietitian Services at 8-1-1 if you are using these products.



HOW MUCH TO DRINK?

How much should my toddler be drinking? She wants a bottle during the day, and at bedtime, and she doesn't seem to want her solid food.

- At mealtimes offer the solid food first, and the milk or water from an open cup.
- Your child needs only 500 ml (2 cups) of milk each day or less if still breastfeeding.
- Sipping on milk or juice or watered down juice between meals may cause tooth decay and they may not want to eat at the meal time.
- Offer water for thirst in an open cup between meals and snacks.
- Juice is not necessary for your toddler. If you decide to give juice, choose 100% unsweetened juice and offer it in an open cup as part of a meal or snack. Limit to no more than 125-175 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) per day.



Weaning off baby bottle

At 12 months start weaning your baby off bottles. It is normal for your baby to drink less milk from a cup than a bottle. Offer milk from an open cup and include cheese and plain yogurt at meals and snacks. Aim to stop baby bottles by 18 months of age.

WHAT TO EAT

Use Canada's Food Guide to decide what to feed your toddler and for planning your meals and snacks.

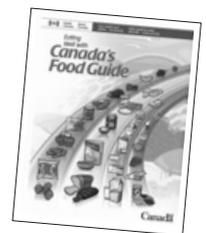
(Ask for a copy of the Food Guide from your Community Health

Centre/Office or go to www.hc-sc.gc.ca.)

At every meal and snack, offer a variety of foods from the four food groups that the whole family will enjoy together:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Meat and Alternatives
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives

Toddlers do better when they have three meals and two to three snacks a day.



Routine

Children like routine. It makes them feel secure. Toddlers eat better when meals and snacks are at regular times.

SAMPLE MENUS

- Each meal should have at least three of the four food groups.
- Each snack should have at least two of the four food groups.
- Start with small amounts and offer more responding to their cues.
- Prepare foods with little or no added salt or sugar.

Sample menu for a one-year-old

Breakfast

- oatmeal cereal
- sliced banana
- breastmilk

Snack

- whole wheat crackers
- hummus
- water

Lunch

- pasta with tomato and meat sauce
- cooked broccoli spears
- breastmilk

Snack

- plain yogurt (3.25% MF or higher)
- blueberries

Dinner

- chicken
- brown rice
- stir-fried peppers
- breastmilk

Snack

- breastmilk

Sample menu for a vegetarian 18 month old

Breakfast

- pancake
- scrambled egg
- banana
- breastmilk

Snack

- whole wheat toast
- pieces of avocado
- hummus
- milk

Lunch

- whole wheat roti with cooked lentils (dahl)
- plain yogurt (3.25% MF or higher)
- cooked, peeled pear
- milk

Snack

- unsweetened O-shaped cereal
- diced melon
- water

Dinner

- tofu
- rice
- stir-fried vegetables
- milk

Snack

- whole wheat crackers
- almond butter
- breastmilk

Sample menu for a 2 year old

Breakfast

- whole wheat toast with almond butter
- boiled egg
- milk

Snack

- whole wheat bun
- peanut butter

Lunch

- pasta salad with cooked red and green bell peppers and grated carrot
- roasted turkey
- grated cheese
- blueberries
- milk

Snack

- cherry tomatoes, sliced
- cooked baby carrots
- creamy dip

Dinner

- steamed salmon
- quinoa
- cooked green beans
- milk

Snack

- cereal
- breastmilk



Snack time

Give the snack mid way between meals; do not offer food all day long. Snacking all day can cause tooth decay and lead to problems at meal times. Play or read with your child between meals and snacks.



Family mealtimes

Include your toddler at the table for family mealtimes. Make it a time to enjoy your food together. Make one meal for the whole family. Include at least one food you know your toddler will eat. Your toddler may not eat everything, but avoid making separate meals.

Building happy, healthy eaters

- The parent(s)/ caregiver decides what food is offered and when the food is offered.
- The child decides whether to eat, and how much food to eat.
- Remember, forcing your child to eat is not a good idea, and will lead to eating problems.
- Help your child feel good about eating at mealtimes.
- You have the greatest influence on your toddler's eating habits and attitudes. Be a role model.
Your child will grow up to eat the way you eat.



Choose foods grown or produced in BC whenever you can.

For more information refer to the following handouts:

**Bye Bye Baby Bottle
Finger Foods
Tasty Recipes for Your Baby and Family
Healthy Snacks for your Preschoolers**

**These fact sheets are available at your
local Community Health Office/Centre
or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>**

For more information, call:

Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC..... Dial 8-1-1 to speak to a Dietitian
Translation services are available in 130 languages..... www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian/
or a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health www.vch.ca

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or
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