

HEALTHY EATING
for Toddlers



Guidelines for Toddlers 1 to 2 Years Old

What your child eats can impact his or her health now and in the future.

HEALTHY EATING

- Toddlers need a variety of healthy foods to help them grow, learn, and be active.
- Your toddler's daily diet should include foods from all the food groups, but **toddlers do not need adult-sized portions.**
- Toddlers' appetites often change. It is normal for them to eat very little one day and then a lot the next.
- Because they have small stomachs, toddlers should have three well-balanced meals plus snacks about every 2 to 3 hours to get all the nutrition they need.

Healthy habits

Help your toddler come to the table hungry (but not starving) by serving meals and snacks around the same time every day.

- At mealtime, serve your toddler a small portion of what the family is eating. Let him or her decide how much or how little to eat.
- Serve fresh fruit instead of fruit juice and fruit drinks.
- Use healthier cooking methods such as baking, broiling, grilling, steaming, or poaching.
- Use healthy fats (extra virgin olive oil or cold-pressed canola oil) for cooking.
- Limit unhealthy food and drinks such as sodas, sports drinks, chips, cookies, candy, and fast food.



Tips for getting your toddler to eat

- Offer a variety of foods each day. Start with 1 tablespoon of each food per year of age.
- Do not use food to reward, bribe, or punish your child.
- Be a good role model by eating healthy foods.
- Eat meals together as a family. Sit at the table and turn off the TV, tablets, and phones.
- Use your toddler's favorite plate, cup, bowl, fork, and spoon.
- Let toddlers feed themselves. Be patient; toddlers are messy eaters.
- Make mealtime an enjoyable experience.
- Encourage a variety of foods, but know that it is normal if your toddler only wants to eat certain foods.
- Do not force your toddler to finish all the food on the plate.
- Ask your toddler's physician whether your child needs a multivitamin and mineral supplement.
- If you have problems or questions, contact your child's physician or a registered dietitian.

Introducing new foods

It is important for your child to try a variety of foods and textures.

- Serve small portions of new foods along with favorite foods.
- Do not force your toddler to eat.
- Keep serving the new food even if your child does not eat it. It may take several times before he or she is willing to try it.
- Refer to Kaiser Permanente's *Feeding Challenges* booklet if your child refuses to eat.

Signs that your child may be allergic to a food:

→ Skin rash → Breathing problems → Diarrhea or vomiting

If your child has any of these symptoms, stop using the new food and consult with your toddler's physician.

Foods that can cause choking

Some foods are more likely to cause choking in children under age 4, so always watch your child closely when he or she is eating. While your toddler is still learning to chew and swallow well, the risk of choking is high. Avoid the following foods, which could be swallowed whole and block the windpipe:

- Hot dogs (unless sliced into cubes)
- Round hard candies or gum
- Nuts (especially peanuts)
- Marshmallows
- Whole raw carrots or grapes
- Raw cherries with pits
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter



WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD DRINK

- Your toddler can have up to 2 cups of 1% low-fat or 2% reduced-fat milk a day. Do not add flavoring like chocolate or strawberry to the milk. You can also substitute unsweetened almond, soy, or other milk alternative.
- Do not give your child punch, soda, sweetened drinks, juice drinks, 100% juice, gelatin, or sugar water (these may hurt his or her teeth).
- Give your child plenty of water.
- You can add fruits and herbs to water for flavor, such as lemon or orange slices with mint.

- Wean your baby from the bottle. Toddlers should start using a cup by the time they are 1 year old.
- Continue breastfeeding for as long as both mother and child want to. Do not breastfeed through the night.

SNACK TIME

Here are some healthy snacks you can try at home instead of chips, cheese puffs, nachos, french fries, cookies, or candy. Check off what you are willing to try.

- Blended fruit with unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- Blueberries or strawberries
- Cereal (low sugar) with fat-free milk
- Cottage cheese with pineapple
- Hardboiled egg with whole-grain toast
- Peeled apples with almond butter
- Pita bread with hummus
- Pita bread with tuna salad
- Plain Greek yogurt (fat-free or 1%) with berries
- Smoothie with banana, berries, nuts, spinach, and unsweetened almond milk
- Soup with whole-grain crackers
- String cheese with whole-grain crackers
- Turkey slice with whole-grain bread
- Watermelon
- Whole-grain crackers with peanut butter and raisins
- Whole-grain tortilla with bean dip



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Help your toddler form healthy habits:

- When your toddler is able to walk alone, show him or her how to walk backward, walk up steps, and stand on his or her toes.
- Toddlers like to play with balls and push-toys, dance, and follow the leader. Take time to play with your child.
- One- to two-year-olds have short attention spans. Do not worry if your toddler is tired of playing a game within a few minutes.

OTHER HEALTHY HABITS

- It is best if children under age 2 do not watch TV or videos. Too much TV may negatively affect early brain development. Do not put a TV in your child's bedroom.
- Don't smoke! Smoking increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, or crib death), ear infections, asthma, colds, and pneumonia.
- All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are 2 years old or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car safety seat's manufacturer.
- Wash your hands and your toddler's hands before feeding and after changing diapers.
- Brush your toddler's teeth two times a day using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on a baby toothbrush that has soft bristles. The best times are after breakfast and before bed.
- Your toddler should start seeing a dentist at age 1.
- Protect your toddler from direct sunlight. Use a hat, sunglasses, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt to protect your child's skin. Use sunscreen on exposed skin (hypoallergenic, SPF 35 to 45).
- Go on walks with your toddler.



YOUR TODDLER ...

- Seems to be in constant motion
- Begins to use a spoon and cup
- Says “no” and wants to do things for him- or herself
- Takes pride in dressing and feeding him- or herself
- Imitates what you do

SAMPLE MENU

Breakfast

- 1 scrambled egg
- ½ slice whole-wheat toast
- 1 teaspoon trans-fat-free margarine
- ½ cup milk
- ½ small banana

Morning Snack

- ½ cup unsweetened Greek yogurt
- ½ apple, sliced and peeled

Lunch

- 2 tablespoons tuna mixed with mayonnaise
- ½ slice whole-wheat bread
- 1 to 2 tablespoons cooked baby carrots
- ½ small orange
- Water

Afternoon Snack

- 1 cracker
- 1-inch cube of cheese
- 2 tablespoons avocado

Dinner

- 4 tablespoons cooked pasta
- 2 tablespoons spaghetti sauce
- 1 small turkey meatball
- 1 to 2 tablespoons cooked green beans
- Water

Evening Snack

- ½ cup milk
- 1 graham cracker



HEALTHY EATING FOOD GUIDE



Food Group: Nonstarchy Vegetables

(2 to 3 servings daily)

1 serving =

1 to 2 tablespoons cooked
vegetables

Choose More Often

cooked:

- broccoli
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celery
- green beans
- peppers
- snap peas
- spinach
- tomatoes
- zucchini

Choose Less Often

- vegetables with butter, cheese,
or cream sauce
- deep-fried vegetables



Food Group: Fruits

(2 to 3 servings daily)

1 serving =

½ small piece

⅓ cup chopped fresh, frozen, or
canned

Choose More Often

- apples
- bananas
- blueberries
- cantaloupe
- dried apricots
- grapes
- oranges
- pears
- raisins
- strawberries
- watermelon
- canned fruit in
its own juice

Choose Less Often

- smoothies with juice and
added sugar
- canned fruit in syrup
- dried fruit with sugar added
- juice



Food Group: Grains and Starchy Vegetables

(6 servings daily)

1 serving =

¼ to ½ slice bread, tortilla, bagel,
or bun

¼ cup cereal, rice, pasta, or grains

2 small crackers

Choose More Often

- whole-grain: breads, pita, lavash, tortillas, bagels, English muffins
- unsweetened whole-grain hot and cold cereals
- whole-grain crackers
- whole-wheat noodles
- brown or wild rice
- corn
- peas
- yams
- sweet potatoes
- quinoa
- amaranth
- farro

Choose Less Often

- biscuits
- croissants
- muffins
- granola
- cereals with added sugar
- white-flour tortillas
- white rice
- ramen-type noodles
- toaster pastries
- crackers (cheese, buttery, etc.)
- french fries
- hash browns
- potato tots



Food Group: Milk, Yogurt, Cheese

(2 to 3 servings daily)

1 serving =

½ ounce cheese

½ cup (4 ounces) milk or yogurt

Choose More Often

- whole, 2% reduced-fat, 1% low-fat milk
- 2% or 1% low-fat or fat-free yogurt without added sugar
- calcium-fortified, unsweetened almond, soy, or other milk alternative
- low-fat cheese
- string cheese

Choose Less Often

- cream
- whole milk
- whole-milk yogurt with added sugar
- milk shakes
- regular cheese
- processed cheese spreads or processed cheese food



Food Group: Meat, Poultry, Fish, Beans, Nuts

(2 ounces/servings daily)

1 serving =

1 ounce meat

1 egg

1 tablespoon nut butter

¼ cup beans, peas, lentils, tofu, or hummus

Choose More Often

- fresh fish
- light tuna packed in water
- chicken and turkey without skin
- eggs
- old-fashioned peanut butter
- nut butters
- beans
- peas
- lentils
- tofu and soy-bean products
- hummus
- lean lunch meats

Choose Less Often

- high-fat meats
- hot dogs
- hamburgers
- lunch meats
- bologna
- fried meats, chicken, or fish
- spareribs
- corned beef
- pastrami
- sausage
- bacon



Food Group: Fats and Oils

(2 to 4 servings daily)

1 serving =

1 teaspoon oil, margarine, butter, or mayonnaise

1 tablespoon salad dressing or cream cheese

2 tablespoons avocado or nut butter

Choose More Often

- olive or canola oil
- mayonnaise
- salad dressing
- nut butters
- avocado

Choose Less Often

- butter
- margarine
- lard
- bacon fat
- cream cheese
- sour cream
- vegetable shortening

