

Feeding your Toddler: (1-3 years old)

As your child's diet moves from baby foods to regular foods, new milestones are reached. Dramatic changes in development are also taking place. You can help move easily from being fed to self-feeding by watching for signs of interest in new foods.

How do I get my child started?

- Your job is to provide a variety of foods at regular meal and snack times.
- Your child's job is deciding whether to eat and how much to eat.
- A regular eating place with limited distractions is best.

Moving to milk

- If you're feeding formula, switch to whole milk after your child's first birthday. Continue whole milk until age 2. Toddlers need the fat and calories in whole milk for growth. After age 2, you may switch to low fat dairy products. It may take your child a while to get used to the taste of whole milk, but continue to offer it.
- If your child has been offered a cup and baby foods at 6-9 months, they tend to be more independent and better able to handle toddler feeding.
- Breastfeeding can continue for as long as you and your baby desire. It is important that breast-feeding doesn't interfere with eating solid food.
- Wean your child from the bottle at about one year of age. Staying on the bottle too long can:
 - Cause cavities your child's teeth, called "baby bottle tooth decay"
 - Lower your child's appetite for other foods
 - Place your child at risk for low iron in the blood

What should my child eat?

Offer a variety of foods

It is important to introduce your child to a variety of foods as eating habits are being formed. No single food has all the nutrients needed for growth. The choices should include meat and/or protein foods, milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, breads and cereals. Try to offer 5 fruits and vegetables each day, just like adults.

- Offer new foods in small amounts. If your child doesn't like the food, offer it again in a few days. Introduce new foods at a meal that includes other favorite foods.
- Watch your child closely for any signs of allergies to new foods like rash, upset stomach or difficulty in breathing. If you see any of these symptoms, check with your child's healthcare provider.

If your child is a picky eater

Picky eating and eating a limited variety of foods (called food jags) is common in toddlers. Although frustrating, picky eating is normal and won't last forever. A child who is growing well and eating some foods from each basic food group is probably getting enough to eat.

Feeding tips and mealtime advice

- Limit mealtimes to 20-30 minutes. This helps your toddler focus on feeding. Put them in a belted booster chair or highchair during meals. Avoid distractions such as watching TV.
- Give 3 meals a day with 2-3 snacks. Don't skip meals. Avoid offering food between meals and snacks (grazing). Your child will learn what hunger and fullness feels like, so they will be less likely to over or under eat.
- Limit juice and milk. Offer your child 3 servings of milk and no more than 4 oz. of juice each day. Offer water between meals and with snacks to increase hunger at mealtimes.
- Avoid forcing or bribing your child to eat. It won't work and may encourage overeating. If your child refuses a meal, offer a snack in 2-3 hours. Avoid offering too many foods or making special meals. If you are having a hard time feeding your toddler, talk to your child's healthcare provider.
- Set a good example. Families who eat regular meals together that include a variety of foods will pass those good habits to their children.
- Offer finger foods so your child can eat on their own. Encourage your child to self-feed by cutting food into bite-sized pieces. Expect your child's first tries at self-feeding to be messy – skill comes with practice.

Prevent Choking

Have your child **safe, seated** and **supervised** at meal and snack times.

Foods to avoid:

- Nuts
- Whole grapes
- Raw hard vegetables
- Raisins
- Hot Dogs*
- Hard Candy (including jelly beans)
- Peanut Butter (avoid until after 2 years)

*Cut and quartered hot dogs are ok.

How much food should my child eat?

| Food Group | Serving Size | Daily servings |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Bread | ½ slice | 3 ounces |
| Cooked Cereal | ¼ - 1/3 cup | |
| Dry Cereal | ¼ - ½ cup | |
| Rice, noodles, pasta | ¼ - 1/3 cup | |
| Fruit: | | 1 cup |
| Canned | 2-3 tablespoons | |
| Fresh | ¼ - ½ small | |
| Juice | ¼ - 1/2 cup | limit to one serving daily |
| Vegetable | 2-3 tablespoons | 1 cup |
| Milk | ½ cup | 2 cups |
| Yogurt | ½ cup | |
| Cheese | ½ ounce | |
| Meat, poultry, fish | ½ - 1 ounce | 2 ounces |
| Dry beans | 1/3 cup, cooked | |
| Eggs | ½ - 1 each | |
| Peanut Butter (after 2 yrs) | 1 tablespoon | |

- Children between 1 and 2 years of age may gradually increase volume and texture of foods accepted.
- 1 ounce of grain equals 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of dry cereal or ½ cup of rice, pasta or cooked cereal.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.