

Feeding Your Toddler with Love and Good Food

Toddlers are curious and want to make their own choices. Parents help toddlers to safely explore 'family foods' and develop healthy eating skills. Young children need more structure and routine around eating; they also need more fat than adults. Toddlers are full of energy and need active play and family time.



A GOLDEN "RULE" FOR FEEDING CHILDREN

You Decide

- ◆ What food is served.
- ◆ When food is served.

Your Child Decides

- ◆ Whether to eat.
- ◆ How much to eat.

QUESTIONS ABOUT...

- ◆ Food allergies?
- ◆ Vitamin and minerals supplements?
- ◆ Your child's growth or weight?
- ◆ Other food-related issues?
- ◆ Books to read?

*Contact your Health Unit or
Community Health Centre or
Dial-a-Dietitian at 732-9191 (Lower Mainland)
or 1-800-667-3438 toll free in BC.*



Parents Decide

WHAT FOOD IS SERVED

Offer a variety of foods from each food group.

- whole grain or enriched breads and cereals, bagels, muffins, tortillas, roti, noodles and rice
 - vegetables and fruit
 - meat, fish, poultry, cooked dried beans, peas or lentils, tofu and eggs
 - whole milk, cheese, higher fat yogurt, soup and pudding made with whole milk
- ◆ Include foods that are more difficult to chew.
 - ◆ Give toddlers choices within a food group – such as 'bread or crackers?' or 'apple or kiwi fruit?'
 - ◆ Serve a new food along with food your child likes.
 - ◆ Avoid short-order cooking. Catering to toddlers won't help them learn about new foods.

WHEN FOOD IS SERVED

Make eating times pleasant.

Food is to be enjoyed.

- ◆ Serve meals and snacks every 2 or 3 hours, including bedtime.
- ◆ Make mealtime a quiet family time – turn off the TV. Talk about the day's activities.
- ◆ Set an example at family meals to help children observe good eating habits.
- ◆ Let your toddler be a messy eater. This is part of learning.
- ◆ Don't rush feeding. Children often take longer to eat than adults. Expect toddlers to stay at the table at least 10 minutes. When mealtime is over, everyone leaves the table.



Children Decide

WHETHER TO EAT

Saying "no" to food is a way of showing independence.

Occasionally, it is OK for a child not to eat a meal or snack.

- ◆ Is your child tired, upset, or too distracted to eat? Plan quiet time before eating.
- ◆ How much liquid is your child drinking? More than 250 mL (1 cup) of juice and more than 500 to 750 mL (2 to 3 cups) of milk each day can leave little room for other food.
- ◆ Toddlers often ask for the same food day after day. Be patient – this won't last long.
- ◆ Never force a child to eat, or punish a child for not eating.
- ◆ Do not use dessert as a bribe to eat the rest of the meal.
- ◆ Comfort and reward your child with attention and affection instead of food.

HOW MUCH TO EAT

Let toddlers develop their own sense of when they are 'done' or full. At times, children will be hungry and eat a lot. Other times they won't eat very much.

- ◆ Serve small portions on small plates. A 30 mL (1 tbsp.) serving of each food (e.g. meat, potatoes, carrots) may be enough for a one year old. Offer more when they finish.
- ◆ Do not pressure a toddler to "finish your drink" or "clean your plate." Remove uneaten food without comment.





toddlers love to eat

At mealtimes – offer foods from all four food groups (or 3 at breakfast). Plan snacks to include choices from at least 2 food groups.

COOL IDEAS

In a bowl or cup:

- ◆ cold cereal with whole milk
- ◆ milk or yogurt shakes blended with fruit
- ◆ ‘oat rings’ cereal and dried fruit pieces (finger food)
- ◆ yogurt mixed with pieces of fruit or applesauce
- ◆ yogurt with crackers or roti
- ◆ fresh fruit pieces and yogurt for dipping
- ◆ rice and raisin pudding with whole milk
- ◆ soft tofu pudding



On a plate:

- ◆ sandwiches made with egg salad, tuna salad, chicken salad, sliced tender meat, or sliced or grated cheese
- ◆ cheese strips or small cubes (all kinds) with whole grain crackers or slices of apple or pear
- ◆ small muffins and orange wedges
- ◆ crackers or rice cakes thinly spread with cottage cheese or mashed avocado
- ◆ carrot or pumpkin bread, spread with cream cheese
- ◆ buttered toast spread with fruit puree



toddlers love to explore

HOT IDEAS

- ◆ hot cereal with whole milk
- ◆ congee (rice porridge)
- ◆ mini omelettes
- ◆ pancakes or waffles topped with applesauce or other fruit
- ◆ soft tortillas or roti filled with beans, meat or eggs
- ◆ soup made with milk; vegetable soup; split pea, lentil or bean soup; fish chowder with bread sticks
- ◆ macaroni and cheese
- ◆ spaghetti with tomato or meat sauce
- ◆ meatballs with noodles
- ◆ chicken with vegetables
- ◆ fish served in a bun
- ◆ baked beans and toast
- ◆ rice and meat with vegetables
- ◆ chili or lentils and rice



MORE VEGETABLE AND FRUIT IDEAS

- ◆ soft raw or cooked vegetables with dip or hummus
- ◆ grated carrots, beets or cabbage in salad
- ◆ soft raw or cooked vegetables with dip
- ◆ fresh fruit, cut into wedges, with seeds and tough peels removed - apples, banana, berries, kiwi, melon, peaches, pears, plums.
- ◆ broccoli or cauliflower ‘trees’ in mashed potatoes
- ◆ tomato or mixed vegetable juice



toddlers love to learn

WHAT TO OFFER TODDLERS TO DRINK?

- ◆ Whole milk (homogenized) – toddlers need 500-750 mL (2-3 cups) daily when they are weaned from breast milk or formula. (Skim, 1%, 2% milk, fortified soy/ rice/ nut drinks are not good choices before age 2.)
- ◆ Water – every day as a thirst quencher.
- ◆ Juice – limit to 125-250 mL (1/2 to 1 cup) daily. Offer pasteurized 100% fruit juice in a cup.
- ◆ If your child has a bottle, fill it with water.



HELP PREVENT CHOKING

- ◆ Serve food in small pieces that are easy to pick up.
- ◆ Do not give toddlers small hard foods like nuts, seeds, popcorn, hard candies and raw carrots.
- ◆ Spread peanut butter thinly or mix with applesauce.
- ◆ Remove pits from apricots, cherries, peaches and plums.
- ◆ Cut hot dogs and grapes in half lengthwise.
- ◆ Teach toddlers to chew well.
- ◆ Make sure children sit down while eating.
- ◆ Stay with toddlers while they are eating and drinking – for safety and because eating is a social activity.