

## Feeding Your Toddler 1 to 3 Years Old

Now that your child is past the first birthday, growth will slow down and appetite will decrease. Your toddler is also becoming increasingly independent and feeding your child may become a challenge. To be sure your child is getting the nutrition he needs, consider the following guidelines.

### What should my toddler eat?

Offer your child a variety of foods from the 5 basic foods groups. If you are still nursing, continue to do so as long as you and your child desire. Avoid high-sugar, low-nutrient foods such as candy, soda pop, and juice drinks. Each day your toddler should eat:

- **Dairy:** 2 cups (16 ounces) of whole milk (1 cup = 8 ounces), whole fat yogurt or 1 ounce cheese may replace 1 cup of milk.
- **Grains:** 3 ounces grains (1 ounce = 1 slice bread, 1 small tortilla, or 1/2 cup rice, cereal or pasta) – whole grains are a better choice.
- **Vegetables:** 1 cup vegetables
- **Fruit:** 1 cup fruit
- **Meat and meat alternatives:** 2 ounces meat, beans, tofu, or eggs (1 ounce = 1/4 cup beans, 1 egg, 1/4 cup tofu)

### How should my child eat?

- Your toddler should be eating table foods and drinking from a cup.
- Toddlers are still learning basic feeding skills. Encourage your toddler to feed himself. Let him practice with a child-sized spoon or fork, but do not be surprised if he would rather eat with his fingers.
- Mealtime will be messy! Be patient and have fun!

### When should my toddler eat?

- Your child's stomach is still quite small, so it is important to offer him 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day.
- Toddlers eat better when they are given meals and snacks at about the same time each day. Do not let your child snack all day long. Let him know that another time to eat will be coming soon.
- Eat with your child, as a family as much as possible.

### What should my toddler drink?

- Your toddler should be offered milk or water with meals.
- Limit juice intake to 4-6 ounces per day.
- Soda pop, juice drinks, and Kool-Aid do not have a place in your child's diet. They fill up his tummy with empty calories that do not help him grow or too many calories that make him overweight.

### Where should my child eat?

- Your toddler should eat all meals and snacks in a high chair or at the table. It is a choking hazard for your child to eat food around the house or while walking or playing.
- Minimize distractions by sending pets out of the room and turning off the television and radio.

## Does my toddler need a vitamin supplement?

- Most toddlers do not need a vitamin supplement. If your child is eating a variety of foods from the five basic food groups, he should be getting all the vitamins and minerals he needs to grow and be healthy.
- If you have specific concerns, please discuss them with your child's doctor or dietician.

## How can I keep my child safe?

- Toddlers can choke easily. Never feed toddlers nuts, popcorn, whole grapes, hard candy (including jelly beans), chunks of raw vegetables, hotdogs, or carrot coins.
- Do not allow your child to run and play with food in his mouth. Always supervise your child while eating.
- Before eating or touching food, have children wash their hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds. This is the time it takes to sing the ABC song as he washes his hands.
- Let hot food cool to avoid burning your child's mouth. Be especially careful to cool food that has been heated in the microwave.
- If your child has a strong family history of significant food allergy or asthma, delay introducing eggs until 2 years of age, and peanuts, fish, and seafood until 3 years of age.

## How do I prevent meal time from becoming a battle?

Remember that both you and your child have specific "jobs" when it comes to eating:

- The caregiver's jobs are to decide **what** food is offered, **when** the food is offered, and **where** it will be eaten.
- The child's jobs are to decide **if** he will or will not eat, **what** he will eat from the foods offered, and **how much** he will eat.

## How do I deal with a picky eater?

- Offer small portions that will not overwhelm your child.
- When you offer a new food, simply place it on your child's plate without making a big deal out of it. Encourage your child to try at least one bite of all foods, but never force a toddler to eat.
- Try to keep meals and snacks to 20-30 minutes in length. Another meal or snack time is only a couple of hours away.
- Resist the urge to offer sugary foods in an effort to get your child to eat more.
- Don't give up! Keep trying new foods even if your child does not eat them the first time. It may take many attempts before your child decides to accept a new food. Always praise your child for trying a new food.
- If your child totally refuses a food, offer a food from the same food group at another meal or snack.

Be a good role model! Let your child see you enjoying a healthy diet, too.