

Feeding your toddler

1 to 3 years old

Your child is ready to move from baby food to regular food. You can help your child move from being fed to self-feeding by watching for signs of interest in new foods. As you introduce new foods, watch closely for signs of allergy, such as a rash, upset stomach or difficulty breathing. If you have concerns, talk with your child's health care provider.

Set a good example. Good eating habits are formed when families eat regular meals together that include a variety of foods. Offering your child different foods helps your child get all the nutrients needed for growth.

Wean your child from the bottle at about one year of age. Continue breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby desire. It is important that breastfeeding doesn't interfere with eating solid food. After your child's first birthday they may switch to whole milk. It may take your child a while to get used to the taste of whole milk, but keep offering it. After age 2, they may switch to low fat dairy products.

Picky eating and eating a limited variety of foods (called food jags) is common in toddlers. It can be frustrating, but it is normal and does not last forever. A child who is growing well and eating some foods from each basic food group is most likely getting enough to eat. Talk to your child's healthcare provider if you:

- Are having a hard time feeding your child.
- Think your child's diet is inadequate.

Feeding tips and mealtime advice

- Offer 3 meals and 2 to 3 snacks each day. Do not skip meals. Do not let your child eat between meals and snacks. This is called grazing.
 - Meals and snacks should be every 2½ to 3 hours.
 - Let your child decide how much to eat and **if** they are going to eat.
 - Have a regular eating place and limit distractions like TV, iPad, or cell phone.
 - Use a belted booster seat or highchair during meals and snacks.
 - Limit mealtimes to 20 to 30 minutes.
- Offer a variety of foods.
- Give new foods in small amounts. If your child doesn't like the food, try again in a few days.
 - Try the new food at a meal that includes other favorite foods.
 - Try the new food at the beginning of the meal when they are the hungriest.
- Offer finger foods so your child can eat on their own. Cut food into bite-sized pieces. Expect your child's first tries at self-feeding to be messy.
- Give water between meals; only offer milk at meal and snack times.
- Avoid juice or limit to 4 ounces a day.
- Avoid offering too many foods at one meal or making special meals.
- Do not force or bribe your child to eat. It does not work and may cause your child to overeat.
- If your child refuses a meal, offer a snack in 2 ½ to 3 hours.

How much food should my child eat?

Food Group	Serving Size	Offer
Grains Bread Cooked Cereal Dry Cereal Rice, noodles, pasta	½ slice ¼ to 1/3 cup ¼ to ½ cup ¼ to 1/3 cup	Offer 3 to 5 times each day
Fruit Canned Fresh Juice	2 to 3 tablespoons ¼ to ½ small ¼ to 1/2 cup	Offer fruits 2 to 4 times each day. Offer veggies 2 to 4 times each day.
Vegetable	2 to 3 tablespoons	
Dairy Milk Yogurt Cheese	½ cup ½ cup ½ ounce	Offer 4 times each day.
Protein Meat, poultry, fish Dry beans Eggs Peanut Butter	½ to 1 ounce 1/3 cup, cooked ½ to 1 each 1 tablespoon	Offer 2 to 4 times each day.



- Half of the plate should be fruits and vegetables.
- Use this picture to guide food choices and the table to guide portion sizes.


- Start with a small amount on the plate and add more food to the plate as the child eats.
- Foods with protein and fat are important for toddler development and growth. These foods can be difficult for toddlers to accept and eat. It is important to include foods with protein and fat at each meal and snack.

- If having problems with proteins like meat, try offering softer, easier to eat meats like very tender meat that falls apart or thinly sliced meat.
- Healthy meals should include:
 - At least a grain, protein, and fruit or vegetable.
 - An age appropriate milk.

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, unless sliced into 4ths		Hard candy and jelly beans

Use Caution when serving these foods:

Dried Fruits	Popcorn	Pretzels
Chips	Peanut Butter	

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 sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.