



Feeding toddlers

Feeding toddlers can sometimes be a problem for parents!

Toddlers like to choose when and what they eat. As they grow, their appetite sometimes decreases and at the same time they are learning to try different foods, which they might not like. Toddlers can be worried by too many changes and like to keep to the few things they know well.

Toddlers like to show they are starting to learn to think for themselves and often do this by saying 'No' to some foods!

Help your toddler learn about food and eating

You can encourage your child to eat well by being a good role model yourself – eat healthy, regular meals and the chances are your toddler will want to join you. Children have small stomachs - about the size of their fist, and large serves can be off-putting. Try some of these tips to make eating more of a pleasure and less of a battlefield!

- * Make eating fun by having different sorts of food and colours (e.g. different coloured vegetables).
- * Keep offering the food on several occasions. It can take 8 to 15 tries before the food becomes familiar and a child accepts it.
- * Provide a range of nutritious food and give children a choice – give them small serves and let them ask for more.
- * Allow children to help prepare the meal, it takes longer but encourages them to be interested in food (and good cooks in the future).
- * Avoid biscuits, soft drinks, sweets, cordials and too much fruit juice as these are high in sugar and take away the appetite for other foods.
- * Give your toddler the main part of her evening meal early so she is not too tired to eat.



What to feed toddlers

Toddlers will eat different amounts on different days depending on their day's activity, if they are tired or unwell.

Here's a rough guide to the amounts and types to offer, but don't worry if your child doesn't actually eat all of these every day:

- vegetables - two to four serves
- fruit - one to two serves
- dairy foods (milk, cheese, yoghurt) – three serves
- meat, eggs, fish, lentils etc – one to two small serves
- breads, cereals, rice and pasta – three to five serves.

Young children need some fat in their diet for growth and energy. For children over 12 months, cow's milk is an excellent source of nutrition. Reduced fat milk is not recommended for children under two years and skim milk is not recommended for children under five years.

Snacks

Active young children don't like to sit still for long and may be better with several small meals rather than three larger ones. Healthy snacks are a great idea. Here are some suggestions for snacks or lunches:

- * pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables (be careful of hard bits of food that could break off and cause choking) - grate or cook raw carrot, apple etc
- * cheese cubes or sticks
- * dry biscuits (unsalted), bread or toast with creamed or cottage



Toddlers can get messy when they are learning to feed themselves! Put newspaper on the floor and a big feeder or bib on your toddler. The more practice they get in doing it for themselves, the quicker they will learn to feed themselves well.



cheese or a little Vegemite

- * iceblocks made from freezing fruit or pure fruit juices (whole bananas freeze well)
- * hard boiled eggs
- * yoghurt
- * home made biscuits
- * do not give whole nuts to toddlers.

Drinks

- * Water is the best drink to quench thirst. Always have plenty of water available and show your toddler that you enjoy drinking it too.
- * Avoid fruit juice drinks because they contain a lot of sugar. If fruit juice is given it should be diluted with water in small amounts.

- * Limit full cream milk to about 600 mls a day so there is room for other foods.

Vegetarian diets

If your family does not eat meat your child can get good nutrition from other foods such as milk, cheese, eggs, fruit and vegetables. Dried beans and peas, seeds and nuts give vegetable protein (grind nuts into a paste for children under five years).

If you are a vegan and don't eat any animal foods (milk, cheese, eggs etc) you will need medical advice to ensure your child has all the vitamins they need.

Children know how much food they need.

If you push them to eat more than they want or feel they need to finish everything on the plate, they may learn not to stop when they are full. This can lead to weight problems later.

