

What parents
need to know
about
Toddler
Nutrition

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Growth and Appetite

Your toddler may now be walking, is feeding himself, becoming assertive and busy learning a million new things. Mums often worry, telling me 'but he hardly eats anything!'

Babies triple their birthweight in the first 12 months, gaining around 6.5kg. In contrast, most toddlers will only gain about 2 kg in the second year of life. As toddlers, they simply need less food and their appetite is less. This change does not mean your toddler is becoming fussy...but he may be asserting his likes and dislikes!

So, make sure that every mouthful counts. Nutrient poor foods can fill them up quickly, leaving little room for more nutritious foods needed for growth and development. ***Aim for quality, not quantity!***

What foods can my toddler eat?

Small serves of whatever you cook for the rest of the family should now be on the menu. Toddlers learn by example, and your family's healthy eating pattern will set him up for good health throughout life. He will enjoy learning to eat with the family. Foods which are high in fats, particularly saturated fat, or high in salt or sugar are not ideal as everyday foods for any of us.

Engage your whole family in enjoyable activities, like kicking a ball in the park or taking the dog for a walk, to keep you all fit and healthy.

How much does your toddler need?

A child who seems to live on 'thin air' can actually eat quite well throughout an average day, or on average, over a few days. They are very good at regulating their own appetite. If a child is hungry he will eat. If not, he won't - unless you offer him something tempting like chocolate or biscuits or other treat food, which will override his natural appetite control.

A good rule of thumb is you decide when and what, he decides how much!

Offer small serves of healthy foods at mealtimes, and provide a small serve of seconds if they want more. If your toddler doesn't want what you've offered, don't continue to offer alternatives. Wait until later, when he is hungry again and offer a healthy snack. It's OK to let them feel hunger and not feed them every second of the day! Remember that your toddler won't starve through just being picky.

Toddlers learn rapidly that food provides a fabulous opportunity to test their assertiveness (and your patience). Try and remember who's in charge and be consistent.

It's Meal Time!

As with learning how to sleep, it helps to have a routine around eating. Make mealtimes at a similar time each day. Encourage your toddler to prepare for eating... wash hands, set the table (high chair) with his own special colourful placemat and cutlery. Sit and eat together at the table as often as possible and avoid distractions at mealtimes...turn off the TV.

Variety

The colour of foods is a good guide to the nutrients they contain. Ask 'has my child had red/orange/green/white and yellow foods today?' Aim to serve a 'rainbow' of foods each day. Children love bright colours and will enjoy foods like steamed broccoli florets, soft cooked carrot or capsicum sticks, tiny tomatoes or soft fresh fruits like watermelon as a snack. A variety of shapes is enjoyable too! How about changing the venue to eat? Have a picnic lunch on a blanket in the back yard or in the park.

Encourage involvement in food preparation.

Little children will often eat foods they have helped prepare or grow. At around 2 years of age, toddlers are physically able to tear, snap and dip. Let them wear a special apron and chef's hat to help you as 'little chef'!

What to drink?

If you are still breastfeeding your toddler, water can also be offered at meal times. If your toddler is having cows' milk or soy milk, then no more than 2 cups a day is recommended. This is to ensure they have an appetite for good foods you want them to learn to love. Fruit juice can also fill little tummies quickly. Encourage them to eat whole fruit rather than drink juice, and offer diluted juice - no more than 1/2 cup a day. Plain tap water is still the best thirst quencher!

Toddler Milk

Adventurous toddlers are so busy exploring and learning that they can simply forget to eat...and they are easily distracted from eating.

Based on cows' milk, **Heinz Nurture Toddler®** milk drinks provide iron, iodine and essential vitamins not found in cows' milk. **Heinz Nurture Gold Toddler™** also provides Omega 3 DHA and probiotic acidophilus. Simply substitute Heinz Toddler milk drink for cows' milk when they need that little extra. You can be sure they're getting key nutrients without spoiling their appetite.

Obesity

As a nation, we are all getting fatter. It is worrying that around 25% of children are now overweight or obese. Prevention is better than cure, which you will know if you've ever tried to lose weight. Weight loss diets are not recommended for children.

Engaging in daily fun physical activity and healthy eating behaviour is the best way to manage overweight in childhood. As the child grows, excess weight is used up in energy for growth. A low fat diet is not suitable for children, although low fat dairy products can be offered after 2 years.

Do take care not to single out your child who is overweight, their self esteem can suffer. The best answer is for the whole family to adopt better eating patterns. It won't harm anyone to reduce the quantity or frequency of foods like lollies and chocolate, soft drinks and fatty fried foods. Strict avoidance of these foods can raise their desirability, but if they are not in the pantry, there will be less temptation for all.

Feeding traps for parents

The less fuss about food the better! Try and make eating a relaxed and enjoyable occasion. Don't force your toddler to eat, and remember that they learn by example, so be a good role model.

Here comes the aeroplane!

Mealtimes should be fun, but this is sheer bribery on your part.

If you use game playing to get a fussy toddler to eat you are giving lots of attention to the fussy behaviour - a sure way to ensure the behaviour continues.

Would you like...?

Offering endless choices does not help if your toddler is not hungry and toddlers can be overwhelmed with too much choice. You decide what he eats by providing healthy choices, and let him choose how much he eats

He will only eat...

Usually means that he knows if he holds out long enough, this food will eventually be offered! Be firm, and offer healthy choices. Let him leave the table when he's eaten as much as he's going to and offer a healthy snack later in the day.

But he loves his milk...

If he's drinking it from a bottle he probably has little appetite for other important foods, increasing the risk of nutritional deficiencies, especially iron. From 12 months, offer milk in a cup as a snack, after a meal or before bed. About 2 cups a day is enough.

No ice cream until you eat your dinner....

More bribery. Try to avoid using some foods as a reward. This makes dessert more desired and dinner less desired. No food is 'good' or 'bad', some foods are 'sometimes' or 'treat' foods and others 'every day' foods. If dessert is on the menu, offer it regardless of whether the main meal was completed or not...but without a fuss.

Do

- ✓ Provide a range of colours and textures of food for variety
- ✓ Keep trying - it can take up to 10 tries for your toddler to accept a new food!
- ✓ Reward positive behaviour with praise/a cuddle/ a special (non-food) treat
- ✓ Decide what to serve your child - let them decide how much
- ✓ Offer water to drink
- ✓ Have a relaxed casual attitude at mealtimes
- ✓ Eat well yourself and be physically active together as a family

Don't

- ✗ Use food as a bribe or reward
- ✗ Force your child to 'finish everything on their plate'
- ✗ Offer snacks close to meal times
- ✗ Substitute alternatives if your child won't eat the prepared meal
- ✗ Take it personally if he won't eat what you have prepared
- ✗ Have 'treat' foods every day
- ✗ Show your own dislikes in front of a toddler, he will mimic you
- ✗ Use low fat foods for toddlers under 2 years of age

The following guide is a suggestion of what foods to offer - let your toddler choose how much he eats. He may not eat all of a breakfast like this, but a little of each item, and that's fine.

Breakfast

- Heinz For Baby® Iron Enriched Rice Cereal eg. Porridge or muesli and milk
- Slice of wholemeal toast, scrape of butter, margarine or peanut butter, or an egg or cheese
- Slices of tinned peaches in natural juice
- Water

Lunch

- Slice of wholemeal toast with slice of meat, chicken, tuna, sardines or baked beans
- Grated carrot, zucchini and/or slices of tomato and salad greens
- Small banana and yogurt
- Cup of milk

Dinner

- Small serve of family main meal - meat/fish/chicken or vegetarian or pasta dish
- Vegetables - 3 different colours
- Fruit crumble and custard or fresh fruit

Snacks

- Cup of milk (no more than 2 cups per day)
- Pieces of fresh or soft cooked fruit
- Cracker biscuits and cheese
- Soft cooked vegie pieces and dip of mashed avocado
- 1/2 cup diluted fruit juice
- Small tub of yogurt
- Heinz Little Kids® muesli finger, fruit bar or bread stick



If you think your child may be overweight,
or for further information, talk to your child health
professional. For helpful hints, snack ideas and recipes
for toddlers, please see our website:

www.heinzforbaby.com.au

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