



Feeding your Toddler 1–2 years

Helping toddlers learn to eat right and feed themselves is not an easy job!

Toddlers decide: How much they will eat Whether or not they will eat	Parents decide: What foods to offer When to offer meals and snacks Where your child will eat
---	---



What to Expect

Toddlers...

- May eat less as growth slows down.
- Eat more on some days and less on others.
- Refuse to eat new foods, or change their minds about foods they ate before.
- Sometimes want the same food everyday for a week.
- Are easily distracted.
- **Independence:** Toddlers can feed themselves small, soft pieces of food using their hands, or may try a spoon or fork.
- **Cup Use:** Sippy cup or cup is best for toddlers. Bottles can lead to tooth decay or to drinking too much milk or juice. Too much fluid can decrease appetite.
- **Mess: Expect a mess!** Toddlers are learning about taste, smell and texture.

Tips for Feeding Toddlers

It is normal for most young children to dislike some foods. Most children who are picky eaters will grow out of it. Here are some tips for parents and caregivers to make sure toddlers eat a variety of foods and grow well:

Introduce a variety of foods as early as possible

- Start with small serving sizes – your toddler can ask for more.
- Try preparing new foods in different ways – cooked, in soup, with dips. Toddlers like to try different colours, shapes and textures.

Be patient – it may take many times before a child will accept a new food

- Be a role model for your toddler – eat well yourself.
- Respect the toddler's appetite and follow their hunger and fullness cues – **do not force feed, restrict food or trick your child to eat.**

- Do not use food as a reward or punishment.
- Let your toddler learn about food at his own pace – every child is different.
- Serve food in child-sized plates, cups and utensils.

Set regular times for snacks and meals

- Plan meals and snacks around the same times to set routines.
- If your toddler is eating throughout the day, he won't be hungry at mealtimes.
- Too much juice or milk can fill up your toddler – offer water for thirst.

Make mealtimes a pleasant family time

- Eat with your toddler instead of feeding your child.
- Turn off the TV and remove toys during meals – avoid distractions.
- Have your toddler sit down to eat.

What is a toddler-sized serving?

Canada's Food Guide is meant for children 2 years of age to adult but it can be used as a guide for toddlers ages 1–2 years. The number of servings is the same as children aged 2–3 years. Usually the serving size is $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the portion shown in the *Food Guide*.

Sample meal plan for your toddler

Remember, this is only a guide! Every child is different, and appetites vary from day to day.

Time of day	Amount
Breakfast	75 g ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) cereal 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) fresh fruit – cut up 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) homogenized (3.25%) milk
Snack	60–90 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup – $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) yogurt
Lunch	60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) cooked vegetables $\frac{1}{4}$ pita, cut up 1 egg 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) homogenized (3.25%) milk
Snack	$\frac{1}{2}$ slice whole grain bread 25 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ oz) cheese
Dinner	60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) pasta 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) tomato sauce 30–40 g (1– $\frac{1}{2}$ oz) chicken, cut up 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) homogenized (3.25%) milk

Remember:

- Toddlers need 3 meals per day and small snacks between meals.
- Try to include 3–4 food groups at each meal.
- Snacks should include 2 food groups.
- Include 2 servings of low mercury fish every week. Some examples are “light” tuna, salmon, trout or sole. Offer a variety of fish – not always the same kind. Call a Registered Dietitian at Toronto Public Health for a full list of recommended fish or see http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe/fish_mercury.htm.

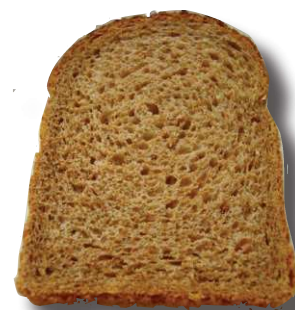


- Toddlers need around 2 cups (500 ml) of homogenized (3.25%) milk per day to meet calcium and vitamin requirements.



Prevent choking: Choking is a common concern with young children. Keep foods age appropriate and always supervise your toddler while she is eating.

- Make food moist and cut meat into smaller pieces.
- Cut wieners and sausages lengthwise in strips and then cut into bite-sized pieces.
- Grate raw carrots, cut hard fruit into pieces, remove pits and seeds from fruits and slice grapes in half.
- Avoid round, hard, stringy, or small foods (e.g. nuts, seeds, popcorn, candy).
- Spread peanut butter thinly over bread or crackers. Do not serve it from a spoon.
- Remove bones from fish and meat.



Good Sources of Fat for Toddlers: It is important to make sure that your toddler gets enough calories every day. Healthy fats are important for brain development and can help meet your toddler's nutritional needs. Examples include:

- Homogenized (3.25%) milk or breastmilk
- Full-fat yogurt (3.25%)
- Avocado
- Cheese



- Nut butters (thinly spread), like peanut butter or almond butter
- Vegetable oils like canola, olive or sunflower oil



- ***Soy milk or milk alternatives (rice milk, almond milk, and oat milk) do not have enough fat to meet a toddler's needs, and should not be given before 2 years of age.***

- For toddlers who cannot drink homogenized milk or breastmilk, soy-based infant formula can be given in a cup.

- Some packaged or processed foods are low in nutrients. Treats are fun and special for kids, so serve them occasionally, not every day.

- Skip the "Kids Menu" in restaurants. These foods are usually high in fat and low in nutrients. Choose healthy foods and share them with your toddler.

Examples of healthy snacks:

- Toast, pita, naan, bread sticks, corn bread or crackers with cheese
- Fresh or canned fruit; cut up cooked veggies, grated raw veggies
- 3.25% plain yogurt or cottage cheese mixed with fruit, tofu or tapioca pudding
- Cereal with milk



- Pancakes, french toast, muffins, plain cookies

Foods worth trying: These are some tasty foods that offer a variety of important nutrients like iron, fibre and calcium.

- Pasta, perogies, or dumplings with tomato sauce and cheese
- Stew, goulash, chilli – chop meat if needed
- Pea soup, lentils, dahl, chickpeas
- Rice, barley, couscous
- Cooked fresh or frozen vegetables, sweet potato – cut up
- Tofu – add to soups or stews
- Whole wheat pita, roti, chapatti or bagels

Allergies

Always watch for an allergic reaction when offering new foods to your child. Consult with your doctor if your child has family history of allergies. For more information about food allergies get a copy of "Food Allergies and Your Child – 1 to 6 years" from Toronto Public Health or see http://www.toronto.ca/health/nm_index.htm#children.

Constipation

Normal bowel movements are different for every child. The number of bowel movements depends on child's age, diet and activity level. The signs of constipation are hard, dry stools.

What can you do?

- Offer a variety of foods from *Canada's Food Guide* especially high fibre foods such as whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables and fruit and legumes (beans, peas, and lentils).
- Ensure your child is getting enough fluids, with more water than juice.
- Keep your child physically active.
- Teach your child not to hold a bowel movement.
- Make sure your child has firm support for her feet when she is passing a bowel movement. It will make it easier to push.

Do not give your child laxatives, herbal supplements or other medications. Call your doctor or Toronto Public Health if you are concerned.

Vitamins and Supplements

Supplements are rarely necessary if your toddler has a balanced diet. There are times when your toddler may not be getting enough variety in their diet. For example if:

- Your toddler has severe food allergies or intolerances
- Your toddler is a strict vegetarian or vegan
- Your toddler is a very picky eater
- Your toddler has been sick

Your doctor or a dietitian can suggest the right supplement, and will know if your toddler cannot take certain supplements (i.e. interference with other medications).

A dietitian can help you plan healthy, balanced meals if your child has allergies.

Food safety

Follow some simple guidelines to prevent food-borne illness.

- Wash hands and equipment with soap and warm water before handling food.
- Clean work areas with soap and warm water.
- Always wash produce before cutting, cooking and giving to your child.
- Keep perishable foods such as milk, cheese, and sandwiches refrigerated until you are ready to serve them.
- Serve cooked foods right away or cover and keep them refrigerated.



- Do not leave food at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- Separate raw meat from raw vegetables.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is important for children from an early age. It helps them:

- Sleep well and eat better
- Develop basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing and kicking
- Develop a lifelong active lifestyle

Where can I find more information?

Ontario Early Years Centres: 1-866-821-7770

EatRight Ontario: 1-877-510-5102 or www.Ontario.ca/EatRight

Peer Nutrition Program, Toronto Public Health: 416-338-8395

Canadian Pediatric Society: www.caringforkids.cps.ca/

The Hospital For Sick Children- Specialty Food Shop: 1-800-737-7976 or www.sickkids.on.ca/specialtyfoodshop/