



## Meal and Snack Ideas for Your One to Three-Year-Old Toddler

### Helping your child eat well

You are the role model to help your child learn to eat a variety of healthy foods. Try the following ideas and suggestions for healthy meals and snacks for your family.



- Share the responsibility for eating:
  - Parents decide **what** food is served and **when**.
  - Children decide **whether** and **how much** to eat.
- Aim to eat meals together as a family. If this is not always possible, have at least one person sit and eat with your child.
- Offer 3 meals and 1 to 3 snacks each day to keep up with your toddler's high energy needs.
- For meals, aim for all 4 food groups: vegetables and fruit, milk and alternatives, grain products, and meat and alternatives.
- For snacks, aim for at least 2 food groups.
- Serve food, milk, and juice just at meal and snack times, and offer water at other times.
- Let children feed themselves.
- Know that it is normal for your child's appetite to change from day to day.
- Never force a child to eat or reward your child with food.
- Expect a mess – it is part of learning how to eat!

For more information, see HealthLink BC File [#69d Helping Your Toddler to Eat Well](#), and [Toddler's First Steps](#).

### Cold food ideas

Here are some cold foods that can be served for healthy meals and snacks:

- Whole grain, cold cereal with whole milk
- Milk or yogurt shakes blended with fruit
- Yogurt with fresh fruit pieces or applesauce
- Yogurt with crackers or roti

- Rice and raisin pudding with whole milk
- Dessert tofu with fresh fruit
- Sandwiches made with egg, tuna, chicken salad, sliced cheese or tender meat
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers
- Small muffins and orange wedges
- Whole grain crackers or rice cakes thinly spread with cottage cheese or mashed avocado
- Banana bread spread with cream cheese
- Whole grain toast spread with peanut butter, fruit puree, or non-hydrogenated margarine or butter
- Whole wheat pita and hummus

### Hot food ideas

Here are some hot foods that can be served for healthy meals and snacks:

- Oatmeal or cream of wheat with whole milk
- Pancakes or waffles topped with applesauce
- Mini omelettes or scrambled eggs and toast
- Congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat
- Soft tortillas filled with beans or ground meat
- Soups made with milk, and a whole grain bun
- Vegetable, split pea, or bean soup with crackers
- Fish chowder with bread sticks
- Macaroni and cheese



- Spaghetti with tomato or meat sauce
- Meatballs with pasta
- Chicken with vegetables
- Rice or pasta and meat with vegetables
- Fish served in a bun
- Baked beans and toast
- Chili, dahl or lentils, and rice

## Vegetable and fruit ideas

- Soft cooked vegetables, such as carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, beans or asparagus, with dip or hummus
- Grated beets or grated raw carrots or cabbage
- Pieces of soft fruit with pits, seeds and tough skins removed, such as apples, banana, berries, kiwi, melon, peaches, pears or plums
- Grapes or cherry tomatoes cut length-wise into 4 pieces
- Tomato or mixed vegetable juice

## What should a toddler drink?

Children are not always good at telling you that they are thirsty, and they can become dehydrated more easily than adults.

- Breastfeeding is recommended until children are 2 years of age and beyond. Breast milk protects against infection and other illnesses and has many other benefits. Breastfed toddlers over 1 year of age need 200 IU of vitamin D from a supplement every day. You can stop giving vitamin D supplements if your child is drinking 500 mL (2 cups) of cow's milk each day.
- If you are weaning a 1 to 3 year old from breast milk or formula, offer milk in a cup to replace missed feedings.
- A 1 to 3 year old toddler who is not breastfed should drink 500 mL (2 cups) of milk each day.
- Toddlers need fats for their brains to develop, so offer whole (homogenized) milk until your child is 2 years of age. Partly skimmed milk (1% and 2%) and fortified soy, rice or nut drinks are **not recommended** before 2 years of age.
- Offer water between meals and snacks to quench thirst.
- If your child has a bottle, fill it with water only.
- Fruit is a better choice for toddlers than juice.
- If juice is offered, limit to 125-175 mL (1/2-3/4 cup) per day. Offer only pasteurized 100% fruit or vegetable juice.
- Serve juice in a cup, never a bottle.
- Avoid fruit beverages and fruit flavoured drinks made from powders or crystals.



## How can I help to prevent my child from choking?

- **Always stay with children while they eat and drink.**
  - Make sure children sit down while eating.
  - Be a good role model by chewing your food well.
- Cook or grate hard vegetables like carrots.
- Chop fruit into small pieces, and remove pits.
- Remove any bones from fish and flake before serving. Rub fish between fingers to find and remove bones.
- Cut round foods like grapes and hot dogs lengthwise first and then into small pieces.
- Spread peanut butter *thinly* on toast or crackers.
- Do not serve hard or sticky foods such as:
  - peanuts, nuts, seeds or popcorn;
  - hard candy, gum or marshmallows; and
  - peanut butter on a spoon.

### Allergy Alert:

Are you concerned about food allergies? Talk to your child's doctor, a registered dietitian, or a public health nurse.

**For more information, contact your community nutritionist, or call 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian.**

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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