



Meal and Snack Ideas for Your 1 to 3 Year Old Toddler

Helping your toddler eat well

You are a role model to help your child learn to eat a variety of healthy foods. You can help your child eat well and share the responsibility with your one to three-year old toddler. Try the following ideas for healthy meals and snacks for your family.

- Share the responsibility for eating:
 - Parents decide which 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, you can have at least one adult sit and eat with your child.
- Offer 3 meals and 1 to 3 snacks each day to keep up with your child's high energy needs. Children should not "graze" – eat small amounts of food constantly throughout the day.
- 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. There is a risk of tooth decay if your child walks around with a bottle, drinking box, or sippy cup and sips from it all day long. Offer water between meal and snack 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 for trying new foods or eating foods he or she dislikes.
- 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](#).

Healthy meals and snacks

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

- Whole grain, cold cereal with milk, milk or yogurt smoothies blended with fruit
- Yogurt with fresh fruit pieces or applesauce
- Yogurt with crackers or roti
- Rice and raisin pudding made with milk
- Dessert tofu with fresh fruit
- Sandwiches made with egg, tuna, chicken salad, sliced cheese, or easy-to-chew meat
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers
- A small muffin and orange wedges
- Whole grain crackers, toast or rice cakes thinly spread with peanut butter, mashed avocado, or non-hydrogenated margarine
- Banana bread thinly spread with peanut butter or other nut or seed butter
- Hummus with whole wheat pita or soft cooked (and cooled) vegetables
- Low sodium tomato or mixed vegetable juice

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

- Oatmeal or cream of wheat with milk
- Home-made pancakes or waffles topped with fresh, frozen or canned fruit
- Mini omelettes or scrambled eggs and toast
- Congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat, chicken, or fish
- Soft tortillas filled with beans or ground meat and cheese
- Vegetable, split pea, or bean soup served with crackers or a whole grain bun
- Fish chowder with bread sticks

- Home-made macaroni and cheese
- Whole wheat pasta with tomato or meat sauce
- Chicken stir-fry with vegetables
- Rice or pasta and meat with vegetables
- Baked beans and toast
- Chili, dahl or lentils, rice, or corn bread
- Veggies, tomato sauce and cheese pizza on a whole wheat pita or English muffin

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 older. Breast milk protects against infection and other illnesses and has many other benefits.
- If your child is no longer breastfeeding, offer 500 mL (2 cups/500 mL) of milk each day. Toddlers need 600 IU of vitamin D each day. Please note that 2 cups/500 mL of milk provides 200 IU. Speak with your doctor or health care provider about vitamin D.
- Toddlers need dietary fat for healthy brain development and growth, so offer whole (3.25%) 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.
- If you are weaning a 1 to 3 year old from breast milk or formula, offer cow's milk in a cup to replace missed feedings.
- Aim to wean a bottle-fed baby to a cup by 15 months. Offer milk and juice in a cup. If your child has a bottle, fill it with water only.
- Sometimes toddlers would rather drink milk than eat solid foods. But drinking too much milk fills up your child's stomach and leaves little room for solid foods. Children who drink too much milk may not get enough iron, and they are at risk of iron deficiency.
- Offer water between meals and snacks to quench thirst.
- Whole 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 as part of a meal or snack.

- Avoid pop, fruit beverages, and fruit flavored drinks made from powders or crystals.

Safety tips

- **Always stay with children while they eat and drink.**
 - Make sure children sit down while eating.
 - Be a good role model by taking small bites and chewing your food well.
- Cook or grate hard vegetables like carrots.
- Chop fruit into small pieces. Remove pits, seeds and tough skins before serving.
- Remove any bones from fish and flake before serving. Rub fish between fingers to find and remove bones.
- Cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes, 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 or your local public health unit.

Click on 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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