



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

What foods do I offer my child to eat?

Offer your child the same healthy foods that you and the rest of your family enjoy. Give your child foods with different flavours and textures from all 4 food groups.

The 4 food groups are:

1. Vegetables and fruit
2. Grain products
3. Milk and alternatives
4. Meat and alternatives

Make sure that the foods you offer are prepared with little or no added salt or sugar. Include healthy foods that are higher in fat like salmon, avocado, cheese, and nut butters.

For more information on the 4 food groups, visit Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guides.html. To learn how to help your child eat, see [HealthLinkBC File #69d Helping Your 1 to 3 Year Old Child Eat Well](#).

What do I offer my child to drink?

Water is the best beverage when your child is thirsty. Offer water in between meals and snacks.

You can continue to offer your child breastmilk until they are 2 years old or longer.

If your child no longer breastfeeds, offer 500 mL (2 cups) of pasteurized whole cow milk (3.25% Milk Fat) with meals and snacks. Limit milk to no more than 750 mL (3 cups) every day. If your child does not drink cow milk, talk to your health care provider about what you can offer.

Children do not need juice or sugary drinks such as pop, sports drinks, fruit beverages, and fruit flavored drinks made from powders or crystals. If you offer juice, give your child no more than 125 mL (1/2 cup) of 100% fruit juice per day. For dental health reasons, only offer juice with meals.

What are some snack ideas for my child?

- Whole grain cereal or oatmeal with milk

- Bite-sized pieces of leftover cooked beef or chicken and soft cooked vegetables
- Milk or yogurt-based fruit smoothies in an open cup
- Yogurt with pieces of soft fresh fruit
- Applesauce with whole grain crackers or roti
- Rice pudding made with milk
- Dessert tofu with fresh fruit
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers
- A small whole grain muffin with fresh fruit and grated cheese
- Whole grain crackers, toast or rice cakes thinly spread with a nut or seed butter or mashed avocado
- Milk or yogurt popsicles blended with fruit
- Banana bread thinly spread with nut or seed butter
- Whole grain pita bread triangles and bean dip

What are some meal ideas for my child?

- Sandwich triangles made with egg, tuna, chicken salad, or easy-to-chew meat
- Hummus, whole wheat pita and soft cooked and cooled vegetables
- Soft cooked short pasta noodles, cooked pieces of fish and peas
- Cream of wheat, or a whole grain cooked cereal such as oatmeal served with milk and mashed fruit
- Homemade pancakes or waffles topped with thinly spread nut butter and fruit
- Mini omelets or scrambled eggs with cooked vegetables or fruit and toast
- Cooked tofu pieces, sweet potatoes and whole grain short pasta noodles
- Congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat, chicken, or fish
- Soft tortillas filled with beans or ground meat and tomato sauce
- Vegetable, split pea, or bean soup served with crackers or a whole grain bun

- Fish chowder with bread sticks
- Home-made macaroni and cheese with tuna and peas
- Whole wheat pasta with tomato or meat sauce
- Chicken, beef, pork, or tofu cut in small pieces stir-fried with soft cooked vegetables and rice
- Rice or pasta and small pieces of tender beef with cooked vegetables
- Baked beans with soft taco or whole grain toast
- Chili, dahl or lentils with chopped tomatoes, rice, roti, whole wheat or corn bread
- Soft veggies, tomato sauce and grated cheese on a whole wheat pita, pizza shell or English muffin

How do I help my young child eat safely?

Children under the age of 4 are at higher risk of choking than older children and adults. They have small airways and less control over swallowing. Always stay with your child while they eat and drink. Avoid feeding your child in a moving vehicle or in a stroller.

To prevent choking:

- Watch your child and make sure they sit down to eat or drink.
- Encourage them to take small bites and to chew the 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. You can rub fish between your fingers to find and remove bones.
- Cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes, and hot dogs lengthwise first and then into pieces.
- Spread smooth peanut butter thinly on toast or crackers.
- Do not feed your child foods with toothpicks or skewers.

Do not give your child foods such as:

- Whole peanuts, nuts, seeds, or popcorn
- Fish with bones
- Dried fruit such as raisins
- Hard candy or cough drops
- Gum, marshmallows
- Lumps of peanut butter, nut or seed butters on a spoon
- Large pieces of lettuce and spinach

For more information about choking and young children, see [HealthLinkBC File #110b Preventing Choking in Babies and Young Children: For Child Care Providers](#).

How do I prepare food safely?

Young children are at increased risk of food-borne illness. Bacteria such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Listeria* are killed when foods are heated to safe cooking temperatures. To avoid food-borne illness, do not offer your child:

- Raw or undercooked meat, fish or poultry. Make sure that meat, fish and poultry are cooked to safe internal temperatures.
- Raw or lightly cooked eggs. These may be in homemade mayonnaise, sauces and dressings or homemade ice cream.
- Unpasteurized milk or dairy products, or unpasteurized juice.

What if my child has food allergies?

If you have questions or concerns about food allergies, talk to your child's doctor, pediatrician, a registered dietitian, or a public health nurse.

For More Information

For more information on feeding your child, see the following resources:

- HealthLink BC's Factsheet Generator for Babies and Toddlers <https://bcfsg.healthlinkbc.ca/>
- Toddler's First Steps www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2017/ToddlersFirstSteps-Sept2017.pdf (PDF 7.68 MB)