

Eating Well

Eating well is key to your toddler's healthy growth and development. Children who eat well from an early age have the best chance of becoming healthy eaters for life.

You can encourage healthy eating by:

- breastfeeding or giving your child expressed milk for 2 years or longer
- introducing solid foods at about 6 months
- working towards offering 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks at regular times each day
- providing a variety of nutritious foods
- watching for your toddler's cues to see when she's hungry or full
- creating a calm eating environment
- eating together as a family
- offering attention, affection and playtime – not food or drink – as comfort
- modelling healthy eating habits



KEY TAKEAWAY

Your toddler's appetite will vary from day to day. By letting her decide how much she eats, you'll teach her to listen to her body. If you're concerned about your child's eating or growth, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak with a registered dietitian.

Mealtime Roles

You and your toddler each have a role to play in healthy eating.

Your role is to:

- ✓ offer a variety of healthy foods
- ✓ offer meals and snacks at regular times each day
- ✓ respond to your toddler's hunger and fullness cues

Your toddler's role is to:

- ✓ choose whether to eat
- ✓ choose what to eat from what she's offered
- ✓ choose how much to eat



DID YOU KNOW

By doing your job with feeding and trusting your toddler to do her job with eating, you'll have less conflict around mealtime.



DID YOU KNOW

If your toddler is often not hungry at mealtimes, she may be filling up on drinks. More than 3 cups (750 ml) of cow's milk per day leaves little room for food.

Hunger and Fullness Cues

What are hunger and fullness cues?

Signs your young toddler gives you when she knows she's hungry or full.

She's hungry if, when food is offered, she:

- opens her mouth
- leans forward excitedly, kicks her feet or waves her hands

She's full if, when food is offered, she:

- pushes it away
- closes her mouth
- turns her head away

When Your Toddler Says No to Food

If your older toddler won't eat, let her leave the table. She may not be hungry, or she may be tired, excited or sick. Wait until the next regular meal or snack time to offer anything more. And resist the urge to use desserts or other treats as bribes for finishing food.



BRAIN BUILDER

By sitting down to eat together, you'll build your toddler's language and social skills while encouraging healthy eating habits.