



Meal and snack ideas for your 1 to 3 year old child

A regular routine of meals and snacks is important for your child's growth and development. Offer your child 3 small meals and 2 to 3 snacks at about the same time each day. This will help them build healthy habits and meet their energy and nutrient needs.

What foods should I offer my child?

Give your child the same foods that you and the rest of your family enjoy. Include a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein foods for healthy growth and development.

Iron, calcium, vitamin D and healthy fats are important nutrients for young children. Regularly offer your child foods with:

- **Iron:** lean meat, fish, poultry, iron-fortified cereals, eggs, beans, peas and lentils, nut and seed butters, dark green vegetables, whole grain foods
- **Calcium:** milk, yogurt, kefir, cheese, fortified soy beverage (offer after age 2), tofu prepared with calcium, canned fish with bones, beans, some dark green vegetables
- **Vitamin D:** fatty fish such as salmon and rainbow trout, cow's milk, fortified soy beverage (offer after age 2), egg yolk, soft margarine
- **Healthy fats:** firm tofu, nut and seed butters, salmon, avocado, hummus, liquid vegetable oils like canola and olive

Prepare food with little or no added salt or sugar.

What are some snack ideas for my child?

Savoury

- Bite-sized pieces of leftover cooked beef, chicken or tofu and soft cooked vegetables
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers and cut-up grapes

- Mashed avocado on whole grain toast
- Nut or seed butter thinly spread on whole grain crackers topped with banana slices
- Whole grain pita bread triangles, bean dip and chopped cucumbers

Sweet

- Fruit smoothie made with milk or yogurt and fresh or frozen fruit
- Homemade popsicles made with yogurt and fruit
- Whole grain muffin served with apple sauce
- Yogurt parfait made with yogurt, pieces of soft fresh fruit and whole grain cereal

What are some meal ideas for my child?

Breakfast

- Dosa (a crepe made with fermented rice and lentil batter) served with lentil stew
- Mini omelets or scrambled eggs with finely chopped vegetables and whole grain toast
- Oatmeal with milk and applesauce
- Whole grain pancakes or waffles topped with thinly spread nut butter and fruit

Lunch or dinner

- Brown rice with pieces of fish and cooked carrots
- Congee (rice porridge) with small pieces of meat, chicken or fish and soft cooked gai lan (Chinese broccoli)
- Fish chowder with whole grain bread sticks
- Pizza made with whole wheat pita or English muffin, topped with tomato sauce, cheese and cut-up peppers

- Sandwich triangles made with egg, tuna, salmon or chicken salad, served with chopped fruit
- Stir-fried chicken and vegetables served with brown rice
- Whole grain macaroni and cheese with tuna and peas
- Whole grain pasta with meat sauce served with chopped cucumbers
- Whole grain tortillas filled with ground meat, cheese and avocado

Ideas with plant-based proteins

Canada's food guide suggests eating a variety of protein foods, especially those that come from plants. Work towards offering plant-based proteins daily. Choose from peas, beans, lentils, tofu, and nut and seed butters.

- Baked beans and guacamole with a soft taco or whole grain toast
- Chickpea curry served with brown rice
- Chili made with kidney beans and lentils, served with corn bread
- Cooked tofu pieces and whole grain pasta with tomato sauce
- Dahl (lentil stew) with shredded carrots and brown rice
- Hummus (chickpea and sesame dip), whole wheat pita and diced tomato
- Shepherd's pie made with lentils
- Thai chickpea curry made with peanut sauce served with noodles
- Vegetable, split pea or bean soup served with whole grain crackers

For more meal and snack ideas, see Canada's food guide recipe database:

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/recipes/>

How do I help my child eat safely?

Young children are at higher risk of choking. Always stay with your child while they are eating or drinking and learn how to help if they choke.

Prepare foods for your child in ways that reduce their risk of choking. For example:

- Cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes and large berries such as blueberries into smaller pieces
- Grate or finely chop raw carrots and apples
- Spread smooth peanut butter or other nut and seed butters thinly on crackers or bread. A chunk of nut or seed butter can form a "plug" that can block the child's airway.

For more information

- [HealthLinkBC File #69d Helping your 1 to 3 year old child eat well](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #110b Prevent choking in babies and young children](#)
- [Health Canada Food Safety Information for children ages 5 and under](#)

If you have questions about your child's food intake, call **8-1-1** to speak to a registered dietitian.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.