

Feeding Tips for Toddlers 12-24 Months

By 12 months, your child will have started eating foods like chopped, cooked vegetables, diced fruits, small bits of chicken, and pasta, and should be fully transitioned to family foods by age 2.

Self-feeding

- Let your child self-feed with baby spoons and forks, toddler plates and bowls, and child size cups (e.g., sippy cups). This is important for forming fine motor skills and allowing children to decide when to start and stop eating in response to their hunger and fullness signs.

Learning to like healthy food

- Continue to give your toddler healthy food including plenty of vegetables and fruits, and avoid offering unhealthy food like sweets.
- It is normal for toddlers to reject new foods, especially vegetables that taste bitter. It may take some children up to 15 or 20 tries before accepting a new food.
- Picky eating, including wanting just a few food items or refusing food that was liked before, is common for toddlers. Be patient! Continue your feeding routines and encourage your toddler to accept and try healthy foods.
- Continue allowing your toddler to determine how much to eat, without pressure to finish everything.
- Let your child use all the senses to explore new food. This is messy and takes patience.
- Model healthy eating and avoid making negative comments about healthy food. Children learn by watching what their caregivers do.



Save money & minimize waste

Offer small tastes of new foods. If your child is still hungry, you can give more then, if you have it.

Use frozen fruits and vegetables if your fresh fruits and vegetables go bad before being eaten.

Mealtime routines

- Establish a routine for your child’s meals and snacks. Toddlers usually eat three meals and two or three healthy snacks every day.
- Include toddlers in family meals or eat with them.
- Make mealtime a pleasant experience in a stress-free setting without distractions (avoid watching TV or other screens).

Promoting Healthy Appetites

- Offer [recommended amounts](#) of healthy food from different food groups at each meal and let your child decide how much to eat. Toddlers may eat less at one meal but compensate at another meal by eating more.
- Don’t pressure your toddler to eat, and don’t show signs of frustration or anger if your child decides not to eat the food that you offer. There is always a next time to try offering the new food.
- Praising your child for eating a healthy food may encourage learning to like it. It’s best if you don’t use food as a reward (e.g., giving candy as a reward for eating vegetables or for the child to stop crying) or “bribe” (e.g., offering dessert in exchange for finishing all the food on the plate at dinner). This can interfere with your child’s learning to control appetite.
- Offering sweets or sugary drinks may be tempting when your child is crying a lot or having a tantrum, but it can prevent your child from learning how to eat healthy and how to control their emotions.

