

# What to Feed Toddlers 12-24 Months

## What to Feed

Plan meals and snacks to provide a variety of healthy food from all food groups (fruits, vegetables, meats/protein, dairy, whole grains).

**Breastfeeding:** It is fine to continue breastfeeding beyond one year, though this should decrease quite a bit during this time as your child eats more solid food.

**Vegetables:** Include a variety of vegetables, especially those that are dark green, red, and orange in color. These vegetables are full of many nutrients.



Offer  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vegetables at most meals and snacks.

**Fruit:** Offer a variety of fruits of different colors.



Offer your child  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit at each meal and snack.

**Protein:** Offer a variety of poultry (like chicken or turkey), fish, meats, and meat alternates (e.g., beans, lentils, tofu, eggs, or nut butter).



Offer  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ounce (about the size of 3 dice) of poultry, fish, meat or meat alternate ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked beans, 1 whole egg, or 1 tablespoon of nut butter) at most meals and snacks.

**Whole Grains:** Offer whole grain foods, such as whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, corn tortillas, or brown rice.



Offer  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 slice of whole grain bread, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of whole grain cereal or pasta at most meals and snacks.

**Healthy Oils and Fats:** Healthy fats are important for brain development. Try fish (without bones) like salmon, tuna, and trout.



Choose foods prepared with healthy oils, like olive, canola, corn, or sunflower oil.

**Water:** Water is the best option when your child is thirsty.



Your toddler needs about 2 cups of water per day to get enough fluids.

**Milk:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends giving pasteurized whole cow's milk to children 12-24 months old. Offer cow's milk without added sugars (no flavored milks).



Limit the amount of milk your child drinks to no more than 2 cups (16 fluid ounces) per day. Too much milk may decrease their appetite for other nutritious food.

At each meal, or as part of a snack, offer your toddler  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (4 fluid ounces) of milk.



Healthy Snack Ideas!



Sliced fresh fruit, cooked vegetables or vegetables with dip, whole grain crackers with cheese

## What to Limit

**Salt:** Avoid adding too much salt to your toddler's food. Your toddler is still learning to develop eating habits that can last for life.



You can season the food that you make with herbs and spices (e.g., basil, cumin, oregano, chili, ginger) instead of salt.

**Juice:** Whenever possible, offer fresh fruit instead of 100% fruit juice. Whole fruit provides less sugar and more fiber than juice.



If you offer 100% fruit juice to your toddler, keep it to less than 4 fluid ounces per day and offer it in a cup, not a bottle.

## What to Avoid

**Added Sugars:** It's best for children younger than 2 years old to not eat any added sugars. Check nutrition labels underneath "Total Sugars" and make sure the line for "Added Sugars" says 0 grams.



**Trans Fats:** Avoid foods high in trans fats, like fried foods and store-bought baked goods.



**Plant-Based Beverages:** Soy, rice, almond, and other plant-based milk alternatives are not recommended for your toddler in place of dairy milk, but talk to your pediatrician in the case of dairy allergies.



**Sugary Drinks:** Avoid soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks, sweetened teas, and flavored milks (like chocolate or strawberry) that have added sugar.



Supervise your child during meals and snacks and avoid offering foods that are a choking hazard such as nuts, whole grapes, popcorn, uncut hot dogs, and hard candies.



## Age-Appropriate Feeding for Toddlers

By age 1 children need about 1,000 calories every day ([see examples of healthy meal patterns](#)).

Toddlers have small tummies and can only eat a little bit at a time, so they should eat five to six healthy meals and snacks a day.

Follow a regular schedule to help your child learn when to expect to eat. If your child decides to skip a snack, don't worry. It's most important that you continue to offer healthy foods and let them decide how much to eat.

