

Building Blocks For A Growing Body

Getting your toddler off to a healthy start in life can be quite a challenge. Even though they are likely to be eating most of the same foods as the rest of the family, keep in mind that they are not just little adults.

It is important to offer a wide variety of food. Toddlers have proportionally greater nutrient needs than adults, and no single food will provide all the nutrients a toddler needs to grow, develop and stay healthy.



Key Points for Healthy Eating for Toddlers:

- Offer a wide variety of foods
- Toddlers get all the fibre they need from fruits, vegetables, breads and cereals. They don't need very high-fibre foods such as high bran cereals.
- Children need a little more fat in their diet than adults to meet their energy needs. Low fat diets are not suitable for young children
- Vitamin and mineral supplements are not needed unless prescribed by a doctor

Thirst Quenchers

Toddlers need plenty to drink to keep their bodies working, especially on hot days or when they are active. A toddler who is not drinking enough can become dehydrated which can lead to constipation. Offer them drinks at the end of meals or between meals, so as not to ruin their appetites for other foods.

Water Is best – it's cheap and readily available. Keep a jug in the fridge.

Milk – Your child needs around two cups of milk each day. It's an important source of calcium, fat-soluble vitamins and protein but is not a good source of iron (unless you use a Toddler Milk which is enriched with iron, vitamins and minerals). Be careful not to overdo it. Too much milk can ruin your child's appetite for other foods and cause constipation due to poor fibre intake. Offer milk drinks at the end of a meal or with a snack.

"My Child won't drink milk" – Instead offer at least two to three servings of other dairy foods each day. Try:

- Fruit shakes made with fresh or canned fruit and milk
- Yoghurt or dairy food with stewed fruit, or serve as a dip for vegetables or fruit pieces
- Cheese: slices, grilled on toast, grated into soups, sauces, or mashed vegetables
- Custards, and ice-cream occasionally
- Milk on breakfast cereals

Fruit juice – The high sugar content in fruit juices can cause tooth decay and diarrhoea in some children. If given, dilute one part juice to ten parts water.

Fruit drinks, cordial, fizzy drinks – These drinks are not recommended for toddlers. They are high in sugar that can cause tooth decay, and offer little nutritional benefit.

Caffeine-containing drinks such as tea and coffee and alcohol are all unsuitable for toddlers and children. Tannin in tea and coffee can prevent children getting the iron they need from foods.

Tips A note on Drinking Cups

From twelve months your child can drink whole cows' milk or a Toddler Milk as their main milk drink. If you are still using a feeding bottle, start thinking about introducing your child to a cup. Ideally, your child will be using a cup instead of a bottle by 18 months of age (or earlier). Children tend to drink far less from a cup than a bottle, preventing them from filling up on too much fluid and spoiling their appetite for other foods.