



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Toddler's Diet Understanding your toddler's diet

You'll probably notice a sharp drop in your toddler's appetite after his first birthday. Suddenly he's/she's picky about what he/she eats, turns his/her head away after just a few bites, or resists coming to the table at mealtimes. It may seem as if he/she should be eating more now that he's /she's so active, but there's a good reason for the change. His/her growth rate has slowed, and he/she really doesn't require as much food now.

Your toddler needs about 1,000 calories a day to meet his/her needs for growth, energy and good nutrition. If you've ever been on a 1,000-calorie diet, you know it's not a lot of food. But your child will do just fine with it, divided among three small meals and two snacks a day. Don't count on his/her always eating it that way, because the eating habits of toddlers are erratic and unpredictable from one day to the next. He/she may eat everything in sight at breakfast but almost nothing else for the rest of the day, or he/she may eat only his/her favorite food for three days in a row, then reject it entirely.

Your toddler needs foods from the same four basic nutrition groups that you do:

1. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
2. Dairy products
3. Fruits and vegetables
4. Cereal grains, potatoes, rice, breads, pasta

When planning your child's menu, remember that cholesterol and other fats are very important for his/her normal growth and development, so they should not be restricted during this period.

By his/her first birthday, your child should be able to handle most of the foods you serve the rest of the family but with a few precautions. Be sure the food is cool enough so that it won't burn his/her mouth. Test the temperature yourself, because he'll/she'll dig in without considering the heat. Try to avoid foods that are heavily spiced, salted, buttered, or sweetened. These additions prevent your child from experiencing the natural taste of foods, and they may be harmful to his/her long-term good health. Young children seem to be more sensitive than adults to these flavorings, and may reject heavily spiced foods.

Your little one can still choke on chunks of food that are hard and large enough to plug his/her airway, so make sure anything you given him/her is mashed or cut into small, easily chewable pieces. Never offer him/her peanuts, grapes, carrots, whole or large sections of hot dogs, meat sticks, or hard candies. Hot dogs and carrots in particular should be quartered lengthwise and then sliced into small pieces. Also, make sure your toddler eats only while seated and supervised by an adult. "Eating on the run" increases his risk of choking. By his/her first birthday or soon

thereafter, your toddler should drink his liquids from a cup. He'll/she'll need less milk now, because he'll/she'll get most of his calories from solid foods.

To get a better understanding of what an average day's meals should look like, take a look at the sample menu below:

Sample One Day Menu

This menu is planned for a one-year-old child who weighs approximately 21 pounds.

1 tablespoon = 1/2 ounce (15 cc)
1 teaspoon = 1/3 tablespoon (5 cc)
1 cup = 8 ounces (240 cc)

BREAKFAST

1/2 cup iron-fortified breakfast cereal or 1 cooked egg (not more than 3 eggs per week)
1/4 cup whole milk (with cereal)
1/2 cup juice
Add to cereal one of the following:
1/2 banana, sliced
2-3 large sliced strawberries

SNACK

1 slice toast or whole wheat muffin
1-2 tablespoons cream cheese or peanut butter (spread)
1 cup whole milk

LUNCH

1/2 sandwich-tuna, egg salad, peanut butter, or cold cuts
1/2 cup cooked green vegetables
1/2 cup juice

SNACK

1-2 ounces cubed cheese, or 2-3 tablespoons pitted and diced dates
1 cup whole milk

DINNER

2-3 ounces cooked meat, ground or diced
1/2 cup cooked yellow or orange vegetables
1/2 cup pasta, rice, or potato
1/2 cup whole milk