Food for the Toddler Years

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Some Keys to Good Nutrition for Toddlers (One- to Three-Year-Olds)

- Offer a variety of foods, including, vegetables, fruits, dairy, grains and protein.
- Offer whole-grain breads, cereal, crackers, rice or pasta for at least half of the grain servings each day. For example, if MyPlate calls for six grain servings, make sure at least three of the six servings are from whole grains.
- Vary vegetables. Offer all colors, including dark green, red and orange vegetables every week.
- Plan menus.
- Offer proper serving sizes, and do not force children to finish their food.
- Make meal and snack times enjoyable.
- Do not use food as a reward or to comfort, and do not routinely withhold food as a form of punishment.
- Offer nutrient-rich snacks such as crackers with peanut butter, cubed low-fat cheese or apple slices.

MyPlate for Toddlers

Recommended Servings

Recommended servings are based on a 1,000- to 1,400-calorie food plan. A toddler’s needs will vary depending on age and activity level. To create an individual plan for your toddler, log on to choosemy-plate.gov, click on "Daily Food Plans," then choose the age of your toddler.

Dairy: 2 cups per day; be sure to choose lower fat selections.

Count as 1 cup:
- 1 cup (8 ounces) 1% or skim milk
- 1 cup low-fat yogurt
- 2 cups low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese
- 1½ cups low-fat or fat-free ice cream
- ½ cups low-fat or fat-free hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, or Parmesan)
- ½ cup shredded cheese
- 1 cup pudding (made with milk)
- 1 cup of calcium-fortified soy milk

Protein Foods: 2- to 4-ounce equivalents (or the amount of a food that has a similar nutrition value as 4 ounces of meat).

Count as 1-ounce equivalent:
- 1 ounce lean meat, fish or poultry
- 1 egg
- 1 slice lunch meat
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- ¼ cup cooked kidney, pinto or garbanzo beans

Fruits: 1–1.5 cups

Count as 1 cup:
- 1 cup (8 ounces) 100% juice
- 1 medium banana or orange
- 1 small apple
- 1 cup canned fruit
- ½ cup dried fruit
Vegetables: 1–1.5 cups
Count as 1 cup:
• 1 cup raw vegetables
• 1 cup cooked vegetables
• 2 cups raw, leafy vegetables
• 1 cup (8 ounces) 100% juice

Grains: 3- to 5-ounce equivalents (or the amount of a food that has a similar nutrition value as 3–5 ounces of a grain).
Count as 1-ounce equivalent:
• 1 slice bread
• 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal
• ½ cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta
• 1 “mini” bagel
• 1 small tortilla, 6 inches in diameter
• 1 pancake, 4½ inches in diameter

Most cakes, pies, cookies, soft drinks, sugar, honey, candy, jams, jellies, gravies, butter and sour cream have either an oil or solid fat and may be loaded with simple sugars. Offer them sporadically and in moderation; offer only if the child needs extra calories after eating the nutritious foods.

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<th>(A Guide to Daily Food Choices for the Toddler)</th>
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When One Food, or Group of Foods, Is the Only Item a Child Will Eat
• Understand that this is a normal phase and that the child will grow out of it.
• Know that, often, the child is in a resting stage of the growth process.

• Understand that the best way to get through this period is to offer the child many foods, providing his or her special food on occasion.
• Know that, when the child is hungry, he or she will eat, no matter what food is served.

Choices for a Healthy Future
• Recognize that eating should be a good experience.
• Understand that some children do not want to try new foods.
• Try to offer just one new food at a time, and do not mix foods.
• Know that serving one favorite food with one new food often helps the child try the new food.
• Try to offer fun foods that the child can eat with his or her fingers.
• Allow the toddler to help prepare foods. Little ones can sprinkle cheese, place raisins on top or spread peanut butter.
• Use cookie cutters to form unique shapes in bread, shake up beverages and roll up tortillas.
• Keep a bowl of fruit on the table, counter or refrigerator so the child can view it as an option. Good food at a young age plays a role later in life. Your child is only a toddler once.

Resources