

Transitioning  
to Toddlerhood



**Start  
Healthy™**  
Stay Healthy  
Feeding Guidelines



5 Principles for Feeding Your Toddler



## Why have feeding guidelines for infants and toddlers?

Feeding your little one in a healthy way now not only promotes normal growth, but lays the foundation for healthy eating habits later, perhaps preventing obesity and other health problems.

But infants and toddlers have unique nutritional needs. So, you may be unsure about what—and when—to feed your child. That's why an expert panel of pediatric health and nutrition

professionals, using the American Dietetic Association's evidence-based review process, developed and published the **Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers**.

The guidelines, reflecting the most current scientific research, provide the basis for this booklet, which offers practical feeding advice specifically for children under 24 months.

*The guidelines address five key areas to answer parents' and caregivers' most frequently asked questions:*



- 1 Developmental Signs:** How do I know when my child is ready to try different foods and textures? *Pages 4-5*
- 2 Nutrition Know-How:** What foods are best to feed my child and why? *Pages 6-9*
- 3 Mealtime Advice:** How can I help my child develop healthy eating habits to last a lifetime? *Pages 10-12*
- 4 Safety Tips:** What are the food safety concerns specific to older babies and toddlers? *Page 13*
- 5 Activity Guide:** How can I teach my child to enjoy movement and physical activity and help with motor skill development and learning? *Pages 14-15*

Start Healthy. Stay Healthy.™

# Transitioning to Toddlerhood

Your baby has grown so much in so little time. Now he's crawling or walking and finding his way into anything and everything. He's also reaching new feeding milestones—perhaps he's trying to feed himself, and is not hesitant about letting you know what he wants.

The first two years of your baby's life are a critical time for setting the stage for how a child can—and should—eat healthfully for the rest of his life. This booklet provides practical feeding advice on what, when and how to feed older babies and toddlers. The information also reflects the energy needs, portion sizes and food choices that they require.

But you know your baby best. So use this booklet as a flexible guide and adjust according to your child's needs.



# Developmental Signs



Your baby's first two years are a time of remarkable **growth**. At no other phase of life will she go through such dramatic developmental changes. But every baby is an individual; your little one will develop at her own pace. So it's important to read your child's developmental signs, to understand her readiness for new food textures and tastes and to help her continue to develop her eating skills. That way, you'll be able to help her make the transition from being fed to feeding herself.

**WHAT  
ARE YOUR BABY'S  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
SIGNS?**



**Eating Skills**

**Appropriate Foods  
and Textures**



**What You Can  
Do to Help**



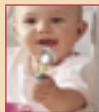
### Crawler

- Learns to move his tongue from side to side to transfer food around his mouth
- Begins to use his jaw and tongue to mash food
- Can feed himself easy-to-pick-up foods
- Holds his cup independently



### Beginning to Walk

- Can drink from a straw
- Can hold his cup with two hands and take swallows
- Dips his spoon in food rather than scooping
- Bites through a variety of textures



### Independent Toddler

- Chews and swallows firmer foods skillfully
- Learns to use a fork for spearing
- Uses her spoon with less spilling
- Can hold her cup in one hand and set it down skillfully



- Pureed foods such as infant oatmeal cereal and pureed baby foods
- Ground or soft mashed foods with tiny soft lumps, like refried beans, ripe mashed avocado and pureed baby foods with small pieces
- Crunchy foods that dissolve easily like baby biscuits, crackers or puffed cereals

- Coarsely chopped foods, including cooked and mashed fruits or vegetables like potato or banana and shredded chicken
- Foods with soft to moderate texture, like cottage cheese and scrambled egg yolks
- Bite-sized pieces, like bits of pasta, cheese cubes and bread cut into pieces

- Coarsely chopped foods, including fresh fruits, cut-up meats and diced hard-boiled eggs
- Bite-sized pieces, like soft cooked veggies cut into small chunks
- Soft solids, like yogurt and instant hot cereal



- Offer mashed or lumpier versions of favorite foods
- Combine the purees baby is used to with tender bits of vegetables and pasta
- Offer foods he can pick up with his fingers

- Choose foods that are the right size, shape and texture to help him learn to feed himself
- Offer foods designed specifically for toddlers
- Have him join the rest of the family at mealtime

- Offer foods that are thick and cling to her spoon or bite-sized foods she can spear with a fork
- Show her how to use utensils, instead of just telling her
- Let her do it herself as much as possible to help develop her skills and confidence

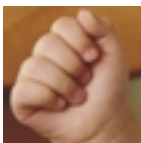
# Nutrition Know-How



In addition to breastmilk or formula, your baby should now be eating a variety of solid foods. Choose foods from each of the food groups and offer an assortment within each group. This will help make sure that your little one gets an array of nutrients.

Work nutrition into every bite. Your toddler's tummy is only about the size

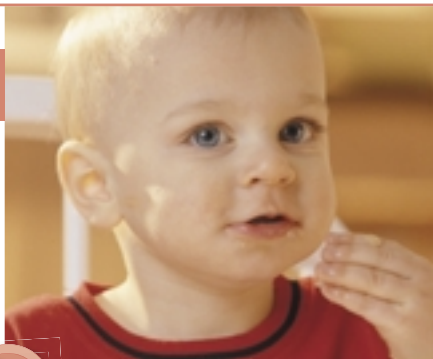
of his little fist, so he needs smaller meals and snacks of nutrient-rich foods



to keep him going throughout the day. Be wary of foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients. These "empty calorie foods"—like chips, cookies and sugary drinks—don't leave much room for more nutritious choices.



So save them for an occasional, but certainly not everyday, treat.



## Serve Snacks that Count

If you provide your toddler with nutritious snacks in addition to regular sit-down meals, you can help ensure that he's getting a balanced, healthy diet. **Try serving some of these healthy snacks.**

- *Whole grain crackers and sliced cheese*
- *Yogurt or whole milk*
- *Diced hard-cooked egg*
- *Avocado dip with wheat crackers*
- *Fruit dices*
- *Veggies sautéed in vegetable oil with bean dip or hummus*
- *Iron-fortified toddler cereal snacks*
- *Smoothies made with milk or juice and fresh, frozen or pureed fruit*
- *Applesauce or other fruit purees with a sprinkle of cinnamon or nutmeg*

## Fit in Five a Day

Nutrition experts agree that everyone, including toddlers, should get five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. It's important to include varying flavors, colors and textures in your baby's diet. By routinely serving your little one fruits and veggies from each color group, you'll be expanding his palate as well as providing a wide array of nutrients.

Getting your toddler to eat five servings each day may seem like a daunting task. But it's really not, when you consider a toddler serving is only  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of fruit or vegetables or  $\frac{1}{2}$  container of baby food. Juice can count as a serving of fruit too, but keep his total intake of juice to no more than 4-6 ounces each day.

## Five Ideas for Five a Day



- Mix a fruit puree and cereal to make a parfait
- Offer fruit puree dip with graham cracker sticks
- Top a waffle with fruit puree or fruit dices
- Add shredded soft-cooked carrots or zucchini to spaghetti sauce
- Mix cooked, finely chopped broccoli florets into macaroni and cheese

## Eat a rainbow every day\*

Color	Choices
Blue/ Purple	Plums, grapes, blueberries, prunes
Red	Tomatoes, cherries, strawberries, red apples
Yellow/ Orange	Sweet potatoes, squash, mangoes, peaches, carrots, yellow apples
White	Potatoes, bananas, pears, cauliflower
Green	Spinach, broccoli, green beans, peas, kiwis

The table is surrounded by illustrations of various fruits and vegetables. Red items (tomatoes, strawberries) are shown next to the Red row. Yellow/Orange items (mangoes, peaches) are shown next to the Yellow/Orange row. White items (potatoes, cauliflower) are shown next to the White row. Green items (broccoli, peas) are shown next to the Green row. Blue/Purple items (grapes, blueberries) are shown next to the Blue/Purple row.

\* All fruits and vegetables should be soft or soft-cooked and mashed or puréed with seeds and skins removed.



## Moving to Milk

If you're breastfeeding, it's wonderful to continue for as long as you and your baby desire. If you're feeding him formula, after his first birthday your pediatrician may tell you you're ready to make the switch to regular whole milk. Be sure to choose whole milk unless your pediatrician indicates otherwise. Your baby needs the fat and calories that whole milk offers for healthy brain development until he turns two.

# Nutrition Know-How



Make sure your toddler gets the critical nutrients.

## Iron and Zinc

These nutrients are of critical importance in your little one's diet, so include lean meat, iron-fortified cereals or toddler cereal squares. Since vitamin C can help enhance iron absorption, serve vitamin C-rich foods like those listed on the "Nutrients Toddlers Need" chart along with her iron-rich food.



## Essential Fats



Healthy eating for toddlers does not mean a low-fat diet. In fact, young children need calories from fat for growth and brain development. Toddlers should get about 30% to 40% of the total calories they need from fat. Breastmilk and formula are important sources of essential fatty acids for infants. But once you make the switch to whole milk, prepare foods with one Tablespoon of oil (soy oil or a 50/50 mixture of canola and corn or safflower) or use salad dressing as a dip to provide these essential fats.

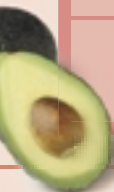
## Vitamin E

Vitamin E is an important antioxidant and is needed for healthy growth. It's found in many of the same foods that provide essential fatty acids, so it's easy for you to provide both.





## Nutrients Toddlers Need!



NUTRIENT	NEEDED FOR	FOUND IN
Protein	Growing up strong	Whole milk and dairy foods like yogurt and cheese, meat, poultry and meat alternatives like soy, dry beans and eggs
Fat	Energy and growth	Whole milk, yogurt and cheese, vegetable oils, salad dressings, meats, chicken, tuna
Fiber	Healthy digestion	Dry beans, whole grains, fruits and vegetables
Calcium	Strong teeth and bones	Whole milk, yogurt and cheese, calcium-fortified foods and juices
Iron	Healthy blood	Meats and iron-fortified cereal
Zinc	Healthy immune system	Meats and zinc-fortified cereal
Vitamin A	Healthy eyesight	Orange or deep yellow fruits and vegetables, dark green leafy vegetables
Vitamin C	Helping the body absorb iron when eaten with iron-rich foods, healthy gums	Vitamin C-rich juices, fruits and vegetables (such as red bell pepper strips, strawberries, broccoli or cantaloupe)
Vitamin E	Healthy growth	Vegetable oils, avocados, toddler cereal squares fortified with vitamin E

## Mealtime Advice



You can help your little one develop a healthy relationship with food. While your role is to decide what foods to offer and when to offer them, let your toddler be the one to decide whether to eat and how much to eat. That means teaching your child to respect his appetite. If he's hungry, let him eat heartily. If he's full, let him stop. Let him regulate his own intake.



Be a good role model



Your toddler learns by watching and imitating you, so set a good example.

- If you eat a variety of foods and he sees you are willing to try new foods, perhaps a new vegetable, he'll be more inclined to do so too.
- Don't wrinkle your nose at a food or refuse to eat it; your baby may react the same way.
- If you want him to drink milk with meals, try pouring yourself a glass.
- Eat fruits and vegetables throughout the day, every day.
- Sit down for meals as a family, without any distractions from TVs and phones.
- Help your child develop independence in feeding by showing him how to hold and lift a spoon rather than just relying on verbal prompts.



# Portions:

## How much is enough?



Portion sizes for adults have grown way too big. But what about those for older babies

and toddlers? How can you make sure your toddler has had enough without giving too much?

- Provide 3 small meals plus 2-3 snacks a day to help fuel him to provide the energy and nutrition he needs.
- Always offer a smaller portion, and then if he's still hungry, give him more.
- It's OK for your child to get hungry. If you've offered at least one food you know your child likes and he chooses not to eat, that's all right. He'll make up for it at the next meal.
- Don't offer food between meals and snacks. Learning what hunger and fullness feels like may help your child avoid overeating, which, in turn, may help reduce the chance of obesity later in life.



### Appropriate Serving Sizes

Food Group	1 Serving =
Milk	½ cup whole milk
Fruits and Vegetables	¼ cup or ½ jar of baby food
Bread and Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bread, ½ slice</li><li>• Cornbread, biscuit, roll or muffin, ½ serving</li><li>• Cereal, dry, ¼ cup</li><li>• Cooked hot cereal, ¼ cup</li><li>• Pasta, noodles, or grains, ¼ cup</li></ul>
Meat or Meat Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meat, poultry or fish, 1 oz.</li><li>• Cooked dry beans or peas, ¼ cup</li><li>• Cheese, 1 oz.</li><li>• ½ Egg</li><li>• Yogurt, 4 oz.</li></ul>

Source: USDA, 2003 Child Care Meal Pattern

## Mealtime Advice

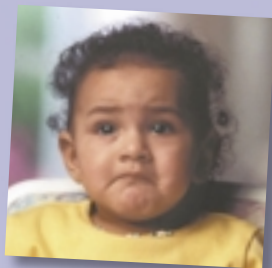


### Make your picky eater a happy eater

"Picky eating" and food jags (periods when your child will eat only a limited variety of foods) are common complaints among parents of toddlers. Here are some ways to make mealtimes more enjoyable.

- Don't force her to eat. Let her decide whether to eat and how much to eat.
- Offer a variety of wholesome, nutritious foods, including foods that you know your child likes.
- Allow her to choose, but if she decides to eat nothing, respect her choice. She'll make up for it at the next meal or the next day.

Although frustrating, picky eating is often a normal stage of development and won't last forever. If it persists, discuss your concerns with your pediatrician.



### If your little one rejects a new food, try and try again

*When you first offer your toddler a new food, don't worry if she makes a little face. She may simply be telling you she doesn't recognize the food. All babies are born with an inclination to reject new foods. In fact, research shows that it takes a baby up to 10 or 15 times before she may decide if she likes a food. Repeated exposures help enhance acceptance and increase the likelihood that she'll be willing to try new foods as she gets older. So don't give up too quickly.*





## How to prevent choking

## Safety Tips

Remember the three S's at every meal and snack: **SAFE, SEATED** and **SUPERVISED**.

- Choose foods that are developmentally appropriate like small pieces of pasta, dissolvable crackers, bite-sized softly cooked fruit or vegetable dices.



- Don't let your child eat while playing or running.

- You should be with your baby whenever she's eating or drinking. You need to be right there if your child should gag on a food, which can happen easily during the transition from eating purees to lumpier foods. Eating too fast or putting too much into her mouth also increases the risk.

### Choking Hazards

- Popcorn
- Grapes
- Raisins
- Nuts
- Hot dogs
- Hard pieces of raw vegetables and fruits
- Hard candies (including jelly beans)
- Peas



### Reduce the risk of food allergy



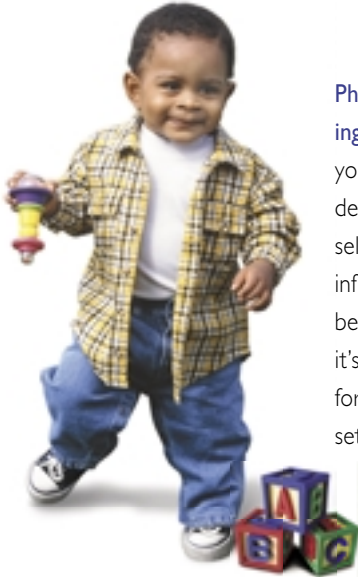
When introducing new foods, watch your baby closely for allergic reactions like rash, upset stomach or difficulty in breathing. If you see any of these symptoms, check with your pediatrician.

**These foods are considered the 8 major food allergens:**

- Eggs
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Fish
- Milk
- Soy
- Tree Nuts, like walnuts and pecans
- Shellfish



# Activity Guide



**Physical activity is one of the most important ingredients in a healthy lifestyle.** Besides keeping your baby healthy, activity may also help him develop thinking skills, communication skills, self-confidence and strong relationships. Help influence your little one's future preferences for being active by what you teach him now. Just as it's important for you to be a good role model for healthy eating, your own active lifestyle can set a good example.

Make a conscious effort to include movement and physical activity in your child's day, and be sure his activities are safe, supervised and age appropriate. Give him the space he needs to be active;



don't restrict his



movement. Set aside at least 30 minutes each day to actively play with your little one—and have fun! Your child loves this interaction and especially the time spent with you.

Encourage extra time for unstructured play, like digging in a sandbox or splashing in a wading pool.

**CRAWLER**

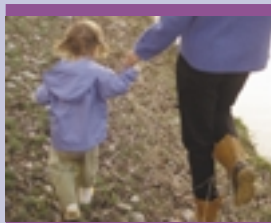
Give her plenty of room to move around. Here are a few activities to help enhance her motor skills.

- Let your baby crawl all over you. Both of you will enjoy the shared contact, and she will learn about coordinating her body movements.
- Play peek-a-boo and hide-and-go-seek while crawling around.
- Move her favorite toy across the room and encourage her to crawl after it. Move the toy all over the room as she scoots around grabbing it.

**BEGINNING TO WALK**

Encourage his every move. Try playing these interactive games with him.

- **“Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.”** Helps with identifying body parts, flexibility and understanding concepts of high, low, up and down.
- **“Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”** Encourages flexibility and strength.
- **“Chase.”** Enhances movement skills and increases a child’s understanding of how to move and play with others.

**INDEPENDENT  
TODDLER**

Being a toddler and being active seem to go hand-in-hand, so be ready.

- Take family hikes and walks.
- Walk on your tiptoes and encourage your child to do the same. This helps with balance.
- Play horse by encouraging your toddler to gallop.
- Play follow the leader, combining all different types of walks and runs—like marching, tiptoeing and hopping.

**Limit TV**

*The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages television viewing for children under age two. There is a place for educational videos that encourage learning and active “follow-me” games like singing, dancing, clapping and other fun activities as they get older. But generally, when children are watching television, they are inactive. Teach your child the appropriate balance between inactivity and activity.*

## Who's Who on Our Expert Panel

This booklet provides practical feeding advice from the Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. The guidelines were created by an expert panel of pediatric health and nutrition professionals, comprised of:

- **Nancy Butte, PhD, MPH, RD**

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