toddler tucker
Healthy eating for 1 to 3 year olds
Ten top tips for feeding toddlers

- Keep meals small – offer more if your child is still hungry.
- Offer healthy snacks between meals.
- Let your child feed himself.
- Give drinks in a cup.
- Let your child tell you when he’s full.
  Don’t force your toddler to finish everything on his plate.
  Remember, appetites vary so the amount your child eats can change from day to day
- He may reject new food.
  Try giving the new food with other food you know your child likes.
  Be patient and keep offering it at other times.
- Encourage him, but don’t force your child to eat.
  Try not to fuss if your child refuses food.
- Eat as a family, and keep mealtimes relaxed and fun.
- Encourage him to chew and enjoy lots of tastes and textures.
- Always supervise your child when he’s eating.
Healthy eating for your toddler

Toddlers need a wide variety of healthy foods. These foods come from the Five Food Groups:

1. vegetables/legumes/beans
2. fruit
3. grain (cereal) foods
4. lean meat/poultry/fish/eggs/tempeh
5. milk/yoghurt/cheese.

Read more about the Five Food Groups on the next page.

How much should my toddler eat?

Your child’s appetite will vary every day. It is affected by her growth, age and how active she’s been.

Your toddler knows when she is hungry or full. Offer her small amounts, and let her ask for more if she is still hungry.

Read about serving sizes on page 9. Don’t worry too much about serving sizes for 1 year olds because their appetites vary so much.

- You decide what your child eats from the Five Food Groups.
- Your child will decide if they will eat and how much.

A normal toddler will often eat less than when she was a baby because growth slows down.

Babies grow very rapidly:
- a 6 month old baby may gain up to 1 kilogram every 8 weeks
- a toddler could take 6 months to gain 1 kilogram.

What should my toddler be drinking?

- Milk
  - full cream cow’s milk from 1 year
  - low-fat milk from 2 years on
  - about 1½ cups (375 mL) of milk each day – a little less if your toddler has some breastfeeds
  - drinking too much cow’s or other milk (more than 500 mL each day) can lead to low iron levels. This can reduce your child’s appetite for other food.

- Water
  - give water at other times.

Give your child drinks in a cup rather than a bottle.

- Toddlers who drink from a bottle for too long are more likely to have tooth decay or ear infections.
- Work towards using a cup without a lid.

Give your child food before drinks at mealtimes. Otherwise, she may fill up on drinks, leaving little room for solid food.
Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre varieties

Vegetables and legumes/beans

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Fruit

Use small amounts

Only sometimes and in small amounts

Drink plenty of water.
### Serve sizes

#### Vegetables and legumes/beans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>1–2 years</th>
<th>2–3 years</th>
<th>4–8 years</th>
<th>9–11 years</th>
<th>12–13 years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>2½</td>
<td>4½</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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A standard serve of vegetables is about 75g (100-350kJ) or:
- 1 cup cooked green or orange vegetables (for example, broccoli, spinach, carrots or pumpkin)
- 1 cup green leafy or raw salad vegetables
- 1 cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables (sweet potato, taro or cassava)
- 1 medium tomato

*with canned varieties, choose those with no added salt

#### Fruit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serves per day</th>
<th>1–2 years</th>
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<th>12–13 years</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1½</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A standard serve of fruit is about 150g (350kJ) or:
- 1 medium apple, banana, orange or pear
- 2 small apricots, kiwi fruits or plums
- 1 cup diced or canned fruit (with no added sugar)
- Or occasionally:
  - 120ml (½ cup) fruit juice (with no added sugar)
  - 30g dried fruit (for example, 4 dried apricot halves, ½ teaspoon of sultanas)

#### Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A standard serve (500kJ) is:
- 1 slice (40g) bread
- ½ medium (40g) roll or flat bread
- ½ cup (75–120g) cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, sarracina, polenta, bulgur or quinoa
- ¼ cup (120g) cooked porridge
- ½ cup (30g) wheat cereal flakes
- ⅛ cup (20g) muesli
- 3 (85g) crisps or crackers
- 1 (80g) crumpet
- 1 small (35g) English muffin or scone

#### Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1½</td>
<td>2½</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
<td>1</td>
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A standard serve (500-600kJ) is:
- 65g cooked lean meats such as beef, lamb, veal, pork, goat or kangaroo (about 90-100g raw)
- 80g cooked lean poultry such as chicken or turkey (100g raw)
- 100g cooked fish fillet (about 115g raw weight) or one small can of fish
- 2 large (120g) eggs
- 1 cup (150g) cooked or canned legumes/beans such as lentils, chick peas or split peas (no added salt)
- 170g tofu
- 30g nuts, seeds, peanut or almond butter or tahini or other nut or seed paste

*weekly limit of 45g

#### Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

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<td>2½</td>
<td>3½</td>
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<td>1–1½</td>
<td>1½</td>
<td>1½</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3½</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A standard serve (500-600kJ) is:
- 1 cup (250ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk
- 2 slices (40g) or 4 x 3 x 2cm cube (40g) of hard cheese, such as cheddar
- ⅛ cup (125g) ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup (60g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (500ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml
What foods are not suitable?

- **Salty snacks** such as chips encourage a taste for salt and salty foods which can lead to health problems.
- **Snack foods** such as sausage rolls, pies and deep fried food are high in fat and salt.
- **Sugary snacks** such as sweet biscuits, ‘sugary cereals’ and lollies can lead to tooth decay. They are also linked to overweight and obesity.
- **Toddler food in pouches** is convenient to use occasionally. These are often a smooth texture that your child sucks out. It’s important that your child chews food – chewing helps with speech and the development of the muscles in the mouth.

What drinks are not suitable?

- **Soft drinks** and cordials have lots of sugar.
  - They can cause obesity and tooth decay.
  - Children can fill up on these, and then not be hungry for food.
- **Reduced-fat milk** is not recommended for children under 2 years because of their high energy needs.
- Healthy children don’t need ‘toddler milk’ or ‘follow on formula’.
- **Milk drinks** (goat’s, sheep, coconut and almond) are not as nutritious as breastmilk or cow’s milk.
- **Fruit juice** has lots of sugar.
  - It can cause obesity and tooth decay.
  - Children can fill up on juice, and then not be hungry for food.
  - It can also cause an upset tummy or runny poos.
- **Tea**, including herbal teas, contains tannin which can affect how your toddler absorbs iron.
- **Coffee**, chocolate drinks and cola drinks contain caffeine.
- **Energy drinks** can contain ingredients, including vitamins, amino acids, caffeine and guarana, in amounts that are not safe for children.
Fussy eating
Sometimes toddlers will only eat a few things or food prepared in a certain way. They develop strong likes and dislikes – and these often change. Days of eating only tomato and cheese may be followed by nothing but bananas and bread. This is part of growing up, and a way for your toddler to show his individuality. Keep offering a wide range of healthy food. Fussy eating for a short time is not very likely to affect his health.

What to do if your toddler refuses food...

Meals and snacks at regular times
- As toddlers have short attention spans and small appetites, they tend to eat often during the day.
  - Serve small, attractive meals.
  - Only put 3 or 4 choices on a plate.

Healthy snacks
- Offer healthy snacks between meals to give children all the nutrients they need.
  - Instead of sugary or fatty snacks, try bread, fruit and vegetables, yoghurt or cheese.

If food is refused
- Stay calm, and clear it away.
  - You can safely keep most food in the fridge and offer it again later.
- Try not to force, fuss or offer bribes. Don’t give food as a reward.

Give some choices
- Children like to have a say in things – it’s all part of growing up. Give them some choices about foods.
  - Remember, you set the choices. For example, ‘What would you like for morning tea – some fruit or a sandwich?’ Or, ‘Which cup do you want your water in – the blue one or the red one?’
Make food fun
- Food should be enjoyed, even if it’s not all eaten.
- For a toddler, enjoying food means touching, feeling and playing with it.
- Encourage children to feed themselves. Hands are as good as spoons, even if they are messier.

Set an example
- Children will usually want the food they see you eat – and reject what they see you refuse.
- What foods do you eat? Would you happily give your child these foods?

Alternative food choices
If your child won’t eat a particular food, there are lots of alternatives.

If your child won’t drink milk…
Milk is a great source of calcium and protein – but so are many other foods:
- **hard cheese** (cheddar): slices or cubes for a snack, or grated and sprinkled over cooked vegetables
- **soft cheese** (ricotta or cottage): mash in foods such as potato or bananas
- **yoghurt**: mix with dried or stewed fruits, make into smoothies, or frozen in hot weather.

Your toddler might not drink milk, but may happily eat custard or a milk pudding.
- Avoid adding flavouring (like drinking chocolate) to milk – it will be hard to get your child to drink plain milk again.

If your child won’t eat vegetables…
Vegetables contain important vitamins and fibre. But so does fruit.
- Most children will eat some fruit and salad vegetables, and these are good alternative to cooked vegetables.
- Some children like the crisp texture of stir-fry vegetables, or will eat a few beans or some grated carrot when you’re preparing the family meal.
- Finely chop up vegetables and cook them in sauces.
If your child doesn’t eat meat…

If you don’t eat meat or your child does not like it, there are other ways your child can get iron and protein.

- Wholemeal bread, iron-fortified breakfast cereals and legumes (beans – including baked beans, peas and lentils) are all good sources of iron.
  - Having fruit or vegetables at the same meal will help absorb the iron in these foods.
- Milk, cheese, yoghurt, eggs, peanut butter, peas and beans all contain protein.

You can get enough iron and protein by eating a wide variety of these foods, such as peanut butter sandwiches, baked beans on toast, and iron-fortified breakfast cereal with milk.

Constipation

Constipation can be caused by not enough:
- high fibre food
- water and other fluids
- exercise.

You can help your child by providing:
- more wholegrain or wholemeal bread, rice and cereals
- more fresh fruits, dried fruits, vegetables and legumes
- plenty of water as her main drink.

Remember to increase the amount of fibre in her diet gradually.

You should also:
- encourage more exercise
- establish a regular pattern of going to the toilet
- try to solve the problem quickly
- see your doctor if your child is constipated for a long time.
Allergies

Many people have food allergies. These can cause mild reactions like a rash or upset stomach, or be severe.

**Anaphylaxis** is a sudden, severe allergic reaction that affects many parts of the body at once. It can lead to hospitalisation or even death.

The most common foods people are allergic to are:
- eggs
- peanuts
- tree nuts (most other nuts)
- cow’s milk
- fish

If you think your child has had an allergic reaction to a food, don’t give that food again and talk to your doctor.

*If he has a severe reaction, call an ambulance.*

Prevent choking…

Young children are at risk of choking:
- Always stay with your child when he is eating.
- Be a good role model and encourage your child to chew well and not to overfill his mouth.
- Never force a child to eat – this can cause them to choke.
- Popcorn, nuts, seeds, hard lollies and corn chips are not suitable for young children.
- Cook hard fruit and vegetables such as peas, beans, carrots and apples.
- Remove small bones and gristle from meat, fish or poultry.
- Remove the skin from sausages.

Think about doing a first aid course so you know what to do if something does go wrong.
When to get help

Contact your child health nurse or doctor if:

- you are worried about your child’s growth
- your child is unwell, tired and not eating
- mealtimes are causing a lot of family stress and anxiety.

For more information contact

- HealthyWA
  www.healthywa.wa.gov.au
- Local child health nurse
- Local family doctor
- Ngala Parenting Line (8am–8pm everyday)
  (08) 9368 9368 (Outside metro 1800 111 546)
  www.ngala.com.au
- Raising Children Network
  www.raisingchildren.net.au
- Kidsafe WA (9am–4.30pm weekdays)
  (08) 6244 4880 (Outside metro 1800 802 244)
  www.kidsafewa.com.au
- Eat for Health
  www.eatforhealth.gov.au

We’ve used ‘he’ and ‘she’ in turn – please change to suit your child.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

This publication is provided for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.

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