

Client Name:

Date:

RDN/NDTR:

Email:

Phone:

Nutrition Therapy for Toddlers Ages 1-3 Years

Growth slows down in the second year of life. Toddlers reach about half their adult height and 90% of adult head size by age 2. Body proportions change during the toddler years as they lose their rounded belly and become more muscular. They will continue to grow at a slower and steady rate until age 3. This handout explains how to choose foods that will help your child get enough nutrients to support normal growth and development during this time.

Tips

- Establish a routine for serving meals and snacks at consistent times each day. Toddlers like to follow routines.
- Offer your toddler 3 meals and 2-3 snacks every day with 2-3 hours in between. Feeding every 2-3 hours allows time for your toddler to become hungry between feedings.
- It is your responsibility as parent/caregiver to choose which foods to offer. Allow your toddler to decide what to eat, how much to eat, and whether to eat.
- Encourage your toddler to talk about food so they can learn to communicate their eating preferences and needs.
- Encourage your toddler to try at least one bite of a new food. It may take 8 to 10 tries before the child will eat it. It is best not to trick, bribe, or force a child into trying a new food.
- Offer a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy and fortified nondairy alternatives.
- Offer whole grains for at least half of daily grain servings.
- Avoid serving large amounts of juice to your toddler as this may cause them to drink less milk.
- Let your child help prepare food. Toddlers generally can rinse fruits and vegetables, tear lettuce, or stir ingredients. Toddlers may enjoy foods more when they participate in the preparation.
- Seat your toddler at a table for both meals and snacks and discourage eating while walking or playing. Make sure the seat is at the proper height for your toddler's feet to be supported and is comfortable. The table should be at the child's stomach level.

Some common feeding behaviors that your toddler may demonstrate should not cause concern. For example:

- Using food and eating as a way to get your attention
- Focusing on eating certain foods and refusing others
- Starting to demonstrate more selective eating habits
- Not wanting to try new foods
- Demonstrating changes in appetite day-to-day

Tips to Prevent Choking

- Always supervise when your child is eating. A child who is choking may not be able to make noise or get your attention.
- Encourage your child to chew and swallow food before talking or laughing.
- Discourage eating while walking or playing or while riding in the car.

The following foods may lead to choking:

- Fruits and vegetables: Whole corn, raw vegetables, raw apples, whole grapes
- Proteins: Hot dogs, meat chunks unless finely chopped, sausage links, peanut butter, nuts unless chopped fine
- Grains: Popcorn
- Sweetened foods: Jellybeans, gumdrops, hard candy

There are several ways to prepare favorite foods to eliminate the choking hazard:

- Cut up hot dogs and link sausage lengthwise
- Cut grapes into quarters
- Cook or steam carrots
- Chop corn into smaller pieces
- Serve peanut butter thinly with jelly instead of by the spoonful

Foods to Choose or to Limit

Food Group	Foods to Choose	Foods to Limit
Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whole grain pasta or brown rice ▶ Whole wheat bread, corn or flour tortillas, graham crackers, or crackers ▶ Whole grain ready-to-eat cereal ▶ Oats ▶ Bulgur or barley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Desserts, sweets, cakes, cookies
Protein Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tender, well-cooked lean beef, pork, lamb, goat or poultry ▶ Fish ▶ Eggs ▶ Chopped or ground nuts/seeds or nut/seed butter ▶ Mashed or well-cooked soybeans, lentils, dried peas or beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Processed meats, such as sausages, hot dogs, bacon, smoked meats
Dairy and Dairy Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breastmilk ▶ Plain, pasteurized whole milk for toddlers 12-23 months of age or 1% or fat-free (skim) milk for toddlers 2-3 years of age ▶ Reconstituted powdered milk ▶ Whole-fat or low-fat yogurt ▶ Regular-fat or low-fat cheese ▶ Fortified soy milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sweetened flavored milks, such as chocolate or strawberry ▶ Unfortified nondairy milks such as almond, rice, or soy ▶ Toddler milks or drinks
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables ▶ Choose whole foods instead of juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fresh vegetables that are difficult to chew (such as vegetables with a skin or peel)
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All fresh, frozen, or canned fruit ▶ Choose whole foods instead of juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Limit juices to 4 ounces per day ▶ Large pieces of raw fruits that may be a choking hazard
Fats and Oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Heart-healthy vegetable oils, such as olive or canola oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Limit animal fats such as butter, lard, bacon fat

Daily Food Guidelines

The following table presents typical daily food recommendations for toddlers age 1-3 years. Your registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) or nutrition and dietetic technician, registered (NDTR) can help you with calculating serving sizes based on your toddler's specific needs.

Food Group	Total Recommended Amount per Day (Age 12-23 Months)	Total Recommended Amount per Day (Age 2-3 Years)
Grains	1¾-3 ounces per day	3-5 ounces per day
	What counts as 1 ounce of grains? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 slice bread ▶ 6-inch tortilla ▶ ½ cup cooked pasta, rice, or cereal ▶ 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal ▶ ½ cup oatmeal ▶ 5 whole wheat crackers 	
Protein Foods	2 ounces per day	2-4 ounces per day
	What counts as 1 ounce of protein foods? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 ounce cooked meat: chicken, turkey, beef, pork, fish ▶ 1 tablespoon nut butter ▶ 2 tablespoons nuts or seeds ▶ 2 tablespoons hummus ▶ 1 egg ▶ ¼ cup cooked beans or peas ▶ ¼ cup tofu 	
Dairy and Dairy Alternatives	1½-2 cups per day	2-2½ cups per day
	What counts as 1 cup of dairy and dairy alternatives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 cup milk or fortified non-dairy milk ▶ 1 cup yogurt ▶ 1¼ cup cottage cheese ▶ 1½ ounces cheese 	
Vegetables	¾-1 cups per day	1-1½ cups per day
	What counts as 1 cup of vegetables? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 cup fresh, frozen, canned, or cooked vegetables ▶ 2 cups leafy salad greens ▶ 1 cup 100% vegetable juice 	

Food Group	Total Recommended Amount per Day (Age 12-23 Months)	Total Recommended Amount per Day (Age 2-3 Years)
Fruit	½-1 cup per day	1-1½ cups per day
	What counts as 1 cup of fruit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 cup fresh, frozen, canned, or cooked fruit ▶ ½ cup dried fruit 	
Fats and Oils	2 teaspoons per day	3 teaspoons per day
	What counts as 1 teaspoon of fats and oils? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 teaspoon oil ▶ 2 teaspoons salad dressing 	

Toddlers Ages 12-23 Months Sample 1-Day Menu

Meal	Menu
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ½ cup whole grain ready-to-eat cereal■ ½ cup yogurt■ ⅓ banana, sliced■ ½ cup whole milk
Morning snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 1 mandarin orange■ ½ cup plain water
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 1 ounce fish, cooked■ ½ cup cooked brown rice■ ½ cup carrots, cooked■ ½ cup whole milk
Afternoon snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 5 grapes, quartered
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 1 ounce chicken, cooked■ ⅓ sweet potato, baked■ ½ cup whole milk
Evening snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 5 whole grain crackers■ ⅓ avocado■ ½ cup plain water

Toddlers Ages 2-3 Years Sample 1-Day Menu

Meal	Menu
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ½ cup cooked oatmeal■ 2 tablespoons raisins■ ½ cup 1% milk
Morning snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ½ cup yogurt■ ¼ cup granola■ ¼ cup strawberry■ ½ cup plain water
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ½ cup cooked pasta■ 3 tablespoons chickpeas, cooked soft and mashed■ ½ cup carrots, cooked■ ½ banana■ ½ cup 1% milk■ ½ cup plain water
Afternoon snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ½ peanut butter and jelly sandwich made with: 1 slice whole wheat bread■ 1 tablespoon peanut butter■ 1 teaspoon jam■ 1 mandarin orange■ ½ cup plain water
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 1 ounce chicken, cooked■ ½ cup green beans, cooked■ ¼ cup mashed potatoes■ 1 small whole grain dinner roll■ 2 teaspoons margarine, soft, tub■ ½ cup 1% milk
Evening snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 5 whole grain crackers■ ½ cup plain water

Sample Meal Plan

Use this form to create an individualized meal plan.

Meal	Menu
Breakfast	
Lunch	
Dinner	
Snack	

Notes: