

Healthy eating for toddlers



Toddlers, aged between one and three years old, need a varied and nutritious diet for optimal health, growth and development. Early food choices may influence a child's preferences and eating habits as they get older. By establishing good habits, you can make a huge impact on your child's lifelong relationship with food.

Family meal times

Toddlers can eat the same foods as the rest of the family – so it's important to ensure family choices are healthy. Whenever possible family meals are important; they allow adults to be good role models and children to learn about new foods. Family meals allow time to sit and talk with children and provide an opportunity for praising your toddler which encourages them to enjoy mealtimes.

Toddlers have small stomachs but also use lots of energy so aim for three small meals a day and small healthy snacks between meals.

Food groups to eat daily

Every day, offer your toddler a variety of nutritious foods from each of the four major food groups. These are:

- vegetables and fruit
- breads and cereals (opt for wholemeal varieties which are better for all the family; avoid large seeds)
- milk and milk products, or suitable alternatives such as fortified soy milk
- lean meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds (care required: refer to information on choking hazards on the next page).

Drinks – milk and water

Provide your toddler with plenty of drinks each day – such as water, cow's milk, breast milk or toddler milk. Toddlers don't need anything except milk or water to drink so don't give them tea (even milky or herbal teas), alcohol, coffee, soft drinks, juices, cordials or fizzy drinks.

Toddlers often like drinking cow's milk (or an alternative) but limit this to two cups (500ml) per day. Otherwise it's easy for toddlers to fill up on milk and not eat enough foods to provide all the nutrients they need. Make sure your toddler gets plenty of water to drink, particularly in hot weather.

Healthy snacks

Snacks for toddlers should be low in salt and added sugar. Some healthy snack ideas:

- carrot, apple or celery – finely grated or cooked until soft
- crackers with a thin scrape of smooth peanut butter
- half a banana
- cheese – thinly sliced or grated
- yoghurt.

Avoid dried fruit which is high in sugar and can contribute to tooth decay.

Vegetables

If your toddler won't eat vegetables – don't worry, it's very common. Keep offering a variety of vegetables. Young children learn to accept foods with their eyes first and when they are familiar with a food they are more likely to accept it.

Try offering vegetables in different ways such as grated or in cooked dishes. Don't forget they are also more likely to try them if they see you eating them!

Cow's milk and calcium

Cow's milk is a good source of calcium which toddlers need for healthy bones. Toddlers should have whole milk (dark blue lid), not reduced-fat milk, until they are two years old. From then, it can be gradually replaced with reduced-fat milk. If your toddler doesn't like drinking milk you can try cheese, yoghurt, custard and milk puddings instead.

Other sources of calcium include mashed canned fish (eg, sardines and salmon), tofu, nut pastes, green vegetables (eg, broccoli, leeks, cabbage and spinach) and cooked, dried beans.



The only toddler milk with no added sugars*
annum.com/nz



Annum PediaPro3 is a formulated supplementary food for young children to address situations where intakes of energy and nutrients may not be adequate to meet the individuals requirements. It is developed for children who are 12 months+ * New Zealand market data May 2017. ANNUM NZ/MM/094/170805. ANM00023.

Proudly made
for our little
New Zealanders



Patient information – Healthy eating for toddlers



Iron-rich foods

Iron is very important in the diet for healthy blood and brain cells, and it helps children to learn. There are two types of iron – haem and non-haem iron. Haem iron is found in meat, chicken and fish and is well absorbed. Non-haem iron is found in plant foods such as vegetables, fruit and cereals and also in eggs, but this type of iron is less well absorbed by the body. To improve absorption, eat fruits and vegetables containing vitamin C (eg, kiwifruit, citrus), at the same mealtime. Vegetarian sources of iron include dark-green leafy vegetables, lentils, chickpeas and peas.

Are extra vitamins needed?

With the exception of vitamin D, toddlers can get all the vitamins they need from the four main food groups.

Vitamin D and the sun

Vitamin D is important for bone health. Most of our vitamin D is made from exposing skin to sunlight. Small amounts can also be obtained from foods such as oily fish (eg, sardines and salmon), fortified foods (eg, some margarines, milk and yoghurts), eggs, and liver.

Toddlers need some time in the sun to get enough vitamin D and it's important they are physically active outside. The amount of sun exposure they need depends on the season, time of day and skin colour. Sun exposure is a risk factor for skin cancer, so protect your toddler from direct sunlight between 10am and 4pm from September to April. Avoid sunburn; use protective clothing and sunscreen.

Feeding skills

Toddlers are still learning about foods and how to eat. Variety is the best way to ensure that toddlers get all their nutrients. It also lets them develop preferences and accept tastes and textures. Toddlers should be eating finger foods and learning to use utensils. Keep offering harder-to-eat foods, such as meat and vegetables.

Tip: Getting toddlers involved with food preparation will help develop their motor skills and encourage them to try the foods they have helped prepare.

Fussy eating

Toddlers can be fussy about food, and this is very common. Give a choice of healthy foods and do not offer

other options if they choose not to eat. Avoid talking about your child as a fussy eater in front of them.

Setting a good routine

Establish a meal and snack-time routine around your toddler's sleeping habits.

- Teach your child to wash their hands before eating – it signals time to stop playing and is good hygiene
- Make meal times sociable and relaxed; sit with the toddler and eat as a family at the table
- Aim for toddlers to choose from the family meal
- Ensure your child isn't distracted by TV or toys.

Serving sizes

A toddler's appetite and the amount they eat may vary from day to day. Serve small amounts and offer more if the child is still hungry after eating the serving. If your child is growing and developing appropriately, they are eating enough.

Tip: For a toddler, a serving size of a food is about the size of the palm of their hand.

Choking hazards

Make sure your toddler is supervised while eating. Teach your child to sit down quietly to eat and drink. Lower the risk of choking by altering the shape, texture or removing skins. For example, use nut butter (not whole nuts), cook or grate hard foods such as carrots or celery, remove skins and pips from fruit, cut up grapes and small tomatoes.

Further information and support

If concerned about your child, talk to your doctor or nurse.

Plunketline 0800 933 922/**Healthline** 0800 611 116.

Original material provided by The Health Media

This information is intended solely for New Zealand residents and is of a general nature only. No person should act in reliance on any statement contained in the information provided, but at all times should obtain specific advice from a health professional. All rights reserved. © Copyright 2018 The Health Media Ltd. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher, Phone +64 9 488 4286.



The only toddler milk with no added sugars*
annum.com/nz



Annum PediaPro3 is a formulated supplementary food for young children to address situations where intakes of energy and nutrients may not be adequate to meet the individuals requirements. It is developed for children who are 12 months+ * New Zealand market data May 2017. ANNUM NZ/MM/094/170805. ANM00023.

Proudly made for our little New Zealanders



Dairy for life