

# Let's Talk About...

## Nutrition for Toddlers

As a caregiver or parent, you are the most important influence on your child. You can do many things to help your child develop healthy eating habits for life. These are guidelines to help your toddler develop healthy eating habits and to promote normal growth and development.

### What is my child's job at mealtime?

Your child can choose to eat or not to eat the foods that you have provided.

### What is my job, as the caregiver at mealtime?

#### Purchase food

#### Plan meals:

- Always offer meals away from distractions such as toys and TV.
- Plan and provide 3 meals and 1 to 2 snacks a day.
- Do not offer food or drink between meal and snack times.
- An example of meal and snack times:
 

Breakfast 8:00 am	Dinner 5:00 pm
Lunch 11:00 am	Snack 8:00 pm
- Allow enough time for the child to finish the meal or snack: 10 minutes for a snack and 20 minutes for a meal. If your child plays and does not eat, remove the food. Tell her "it looks like you are not hungry." The meal is over until the next meal or snack time. Do not provide a snack or meal again until the next scheduled meal or snack.

#### Prepare food:

- Make food in a form that is easy and safe for your child to eat.
- Offer milk at all meals. The average amount of milk for a toddler is 4–6 ounces each meal.

- Do not give your child more than 2–4 ounces of juice per day.
- Avoid giving your child fruit punch, Kool-Aid®, soda, Gatorade®, or other sugary drinks. These drinks do not provide adequate nutrition and have few calories and nutrients compared with milk.

#### Provide pleasant mealtimes:

- Eat together as a family as often as possible.
- Model good behavior at the table.
- Avoid talking about :
  - How much your child eats.
  - What your child eats.
  - What your child has eaten before.
- Let your child feed herself as much as possible. Provide a plastic sheet (splat mat) under her high chair to catch any mess. Wipe your child's mouth and clean up only when the meal or snack is over.
- Do not coax, beg, bribe, reward, force-feed, or play games to get your child to eat.
- Do not offer other foods if your child refuses to eat.
- Do not act concerned over what your child eats or does not eat.

### What is the difference between controlling and setting limits?

It is important to find a middle ground between controlling and setting limits.

**Too controlling** would be if you make your child:

- Stay at the table to eat her vegetables.
- Clean her plate.
- Eat everything before she can have dessert.
- Get by on only three meals a day.

**Not setting enough limits** would be if you:

- Give your child a snack whenever she wants one.
- Let your child behave badly at the table.
- Regularly produce special food for your child.
- Prepare food items at her request or being a short-order cook for her.
- Let your child have juice or milk whenever she wants it.

## What are some menus and food guidelines?

If your child is underweight for her height; use whole milk at meals and snack times, add butter or margarine to breads and crackers, dip veggies in ranch dressing, and dip apple slices in peanut butter.

If your child is overweight for her height; use 1% or skim milk at meals and water at other times. Avoid juice, soda, punches, and sport drinks. Limit the use of butter and margarine, use low fat dressings, and encourage plenty of fruits and vegetables.

All children over the age of two, who are growing appropriately, can safely drink 1% or skim milk.

See the sample menu to the right for ideas.

## What if I have more questions?

If you worry about your child's growth or weight, contact your child's pediatrician or a registered dietitian for more information.

## Here are some helpful books and online resources:

- *How to Get Your Kid to Eat... but Not Too Much* by Ellyn Satter
- *Child of Mine – Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter
- [www.ellynsatter.com](http://www.ellynsatter.com)
- [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)
- [www.eatright.org/kids](http://www.eatright.org/kids)
- [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org)
- [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

Sample Menu for Toddlers between 1 and 3 Years of Age	
Breakfast	
Option 1	Option 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ – ½ cup oatmeal</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> <li>• ½ banana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 oz yogurt</li> <li>• ½ – 1 slice whole wheat toast with peanut butter</li> <li>• 1 sliced kiwi fruit</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>
Lunch	
Option 1	Option 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ of an egg or tuna fish sandwich (use whole wheat bread)</li> <li>• Cucumber slices</li> <li>• ½ apple, sliced</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ cup refried beans</li> <li>• 1 ounce shredded cheese</li> <li>• ½ cup carrot sticks</li> <li>• ½ orange</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>
Afternoon Snack	
Option 1	Option 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ cup chopped fresh seasonal fruit</li> <li>• ½ cup vanilla yogurt</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 oz cheese cubes</li> <li>• Chopped red or green pepper, tomato, cucumber</li> <li>• 1–2 whole grain crackers</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>
Dinner	
Option 1	Option 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ – ½ cup refried beans</li> <li>• ¼ – ½ whole wheat or corn tortilla</li> <li>• Shredded lettuce, chopped tomato, green or red pepper slices, cheese.</li> <li>• ¼ cup grapes</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1–2 ounces broiled chicken, finely chopped with 1–2 Tbsp gravy</li> <li>• ¼ cup instant brown rice</li> <li>• ¼ cup green beans</li> <li>• ¼ cup chopped fruit</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>
Afternoon Snack	
Option 1	Option 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Graham Crackers</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp Peanut butter</li> <li>• ½ cup milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ cup fruit with ½ cup yogurt smoothie</li> </ul>