

A close-up photograph of a young child with light brown hair, wearing a white bucket hat and a white t-shirt. The child is holding a bright red apple with both hands and is in the process of taking a bite. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text 'Tucker without Tantrums' is overlaid in a purple font at the top of the image.

Tucker without Tantrums

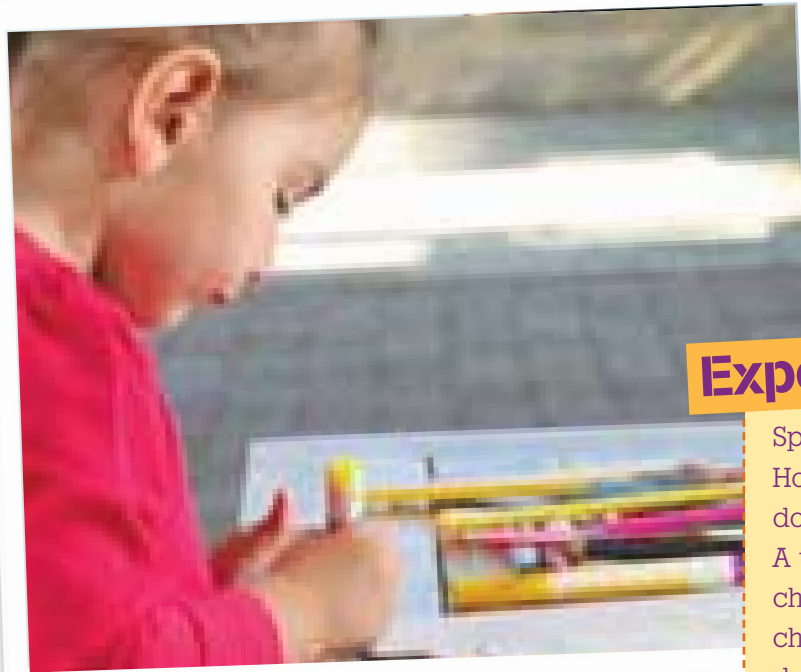
**A Guide to
healthy eating for
your toddler**

Feeding toddlers

You'd think it would be easy getting toddlers to do something that should come naturally – eat!

Toddlers often have small appetites and very firm likes and dislikes.

Your baby is quickly growing into a busy and independent little person. Part of that independence can result in a battle about almost everything. Children quickly learn that food is really important to you. Battles about food cause parents the most worry – is the family food alright, or are special foods required?



Food Fads...

Toddlers may have times when their diets are very limited. They will only eat foods prepared and presented in a certain way. They develop strong likes and dislikes, and these change frequently. Days of eating only tomato and cheese may be followed by a hatred of everything but bananas and bread.

These food fads are one of the ways children assert themselves as individuals. Fads are rarely a danger to health. The fad changes so quickly that the diet eventually becomes quite varied.

It is usually easier for parents to play along with harmless food fads.

When to seek help?

Contact your Child Health Centre or GP 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

Experts Say...

Special meals for toddlers are not needed. Home cooked meals are quite satisfactory, but don't load them with added sugar or salt. A taste for sugar and salt develops when children are young and it is a difficult habit to change later. Sugary foods and drinks can decay young teeth and children don't need added salt in their food.

Best food choices for children **one to three** **years of age.**

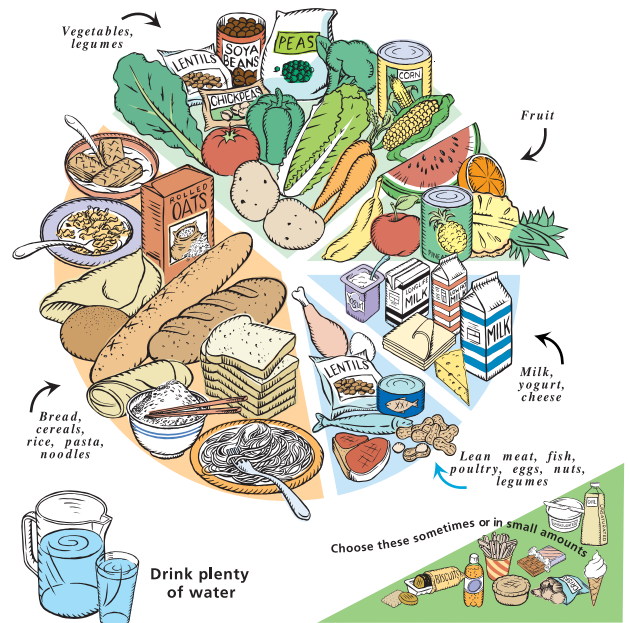
The pre-school years are the ideal time for your child to learn to eat a variety of nutritious foods.

There are only a few foods that are not suitable for young children. Whole nuts are not recommended because of the danger of choking. Honey is not suitable for children less than two years of age as it contains bacteria that can be harmful to infants. Reduced or low fat milk is not recommended for children under two years.

The Guide will help you select the type of foods to make the best choices for your child. Remember, the amount your child eats will vary depending on their appetite and individual needs as they are growing.

THE AUSTRALIAN GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING

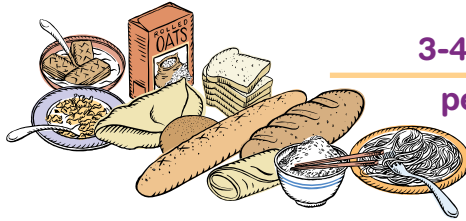
Enjoy a variety of foods every day



Recommended serves for Toddlers

Choose foods from each of the following five food groups:

Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles



3-4 serves per day

A serve is...

- = 1 slice of bread
- = 1/2 medium bread roll
- = 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles
- = 1/2 cup porridge
- = 2/3 cup breakfast cereal
- = 1/4 cup muesli

Vegetables, legumes

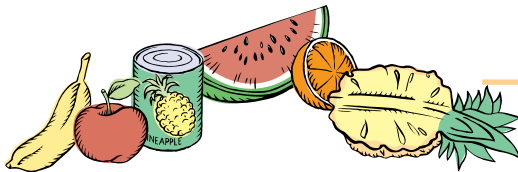


1 serve per day

- = 1/2 cup cooked vegetables
- = 1/2 cup cooked or canned beans, lentils, chick peas or split peas
- = 1 cup salad vegetables
- = 1 small potato

Offer small amounts of different vegetables to make up one serve each day

Fruit



1-2 serves per day

- = 1 medium piece (eg. apple, banana, orange, pear)
- = 2 small pieces (eg. apricots, kiwi fruit, plums)
- = 1 cup diced or canned fruit
- = 1/2 cup 100% juice
- = dried fruit (eg. 4 apricot halves, 1 1/2 tbsp sultanas)

Milk, yogurt, cheese



2-3 serves per day

- = 250 mL (1 cup) milk
- = 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- = 40 g (2 slices) cheese
- = 200 g (1 small carton) yogurt
- = 250 mL (1 cup) custard

As toddlers have more solid foods, they drink less milk

Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes



1 serve per day

- = 45-60 g cooked lean meat or chicken (eg. 1/4 cup mince, 1 small chop, 1 slice of roast)
- = 1/4 cup cooked or canned beans, lentils, chick peas or split peas
- = 1 medium egg

Limit “extra” foods. Some foods do not fit into the five food groups. They contain too much fat, sugar and/or salt and very few essential nutrients. It is recommended that young children are not given these foods (or very occasionally only) as they replace other foods and the essential nutrients needed for growth and development.



What to do if **your** toddler refuses **food...**

Try the following approach:

Offer 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.

Offer healthy snacks

Small appetites mean that healthy snacks need to be offered between meals to give children all the nutrients they need. So rather than sugary or fatty snack foods try breads, fruits and vegetables, yogurt or cheese.

If food is rejected

Calmly clear it away. Most food can be safely kept in the fridge and offered again later. Try not to bully, fuss or offer bribes.

Give some choices

Children like to have a say in things – this is all part of growing up. So give them some choices about foods. Remember, you set the limits about what choices are available. For example you could say, “What would you like for morning tea – some fruit or a sandwich?” Or, “Which cup do you want your drink of water from – the blue one or the red one?”

Make food fun

Food should be enjoyed, even if it is not all eaten. For a toddler, enjoying food means touching, feeling and playing with it. Let children feed themselves. Hands are as good as spoons, even if they are messier.

Set an example

Children will usually want the foods they see you eating – and reject the foods they see you refuse. So it's worth looking at your own diet. Are you adding too much sugar,

salt or fat to your food? Do you eat too many take-aways, not enough vegetables? Would you confidently feed your child the foods you eat? Remember, low fat and restrictive fad diets are not suitable for children and may affect their growth and development.

- **A child will eat when hungry**
- **A healthy child who refuses to eat is not hungry and therefore doesn't need food right now**
- **A healthy child will not starve to death through stubborn food refusal**



Alternatives to some foods

No single food is essential to a child's diet, and a substitute food can easily be found.

"My child won't drink milk"...

is a common problem.

Milk is an excellent source of calcium and protein – but so are many other foods.

Cheese: hard cheeses (cheddar) can be sliced or cut into cubes for a snack, or grated and sprinkled over cooked vegetables.

Soft cheeses (ricotta or cottage) can be mashed in foods such as potato or bananas.

Yogurt: can be mixed with dried or stewed fruits, made into smoothies or frozen in hot weather.

Milk may not be accepted as a drink but happily eaten as custard or a milk pudding. Avoid adding sweet flavourings to milk drinks, it will be hard to get your child to drink plain milk again.

"My child hates all vegetables"...

is an even more common problem.

Vegetables contain valuable vitamins and fibre. But so do fruits.

Most children will eat some fruits and salad vegetables, and these are good substitutes for cooked vegetables. Children often like the crisp texture of stir-fry vegetables, or they may simply eat a few beans or some grated carrot when you are preparing the family meal.



"My child won't touch meat"...

is another common complaint.

Meat contains valuable nutrients like iron and protein, but so do many other foods.

Wholemeal bread, iron-fortified breakfast cereals, dried beans (eg. baked beans) and lentils all contain iron. Protein is found in milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, peanut butter and beans. By mixing foods you can easily match meat for iron and protein. For example peanut butter sandwiches, baked beans on toast, and iron-fortified breakfast cereal with milk all contain iron and protein. Having fruit or vegetables at the same meal will help absorb the iron in these foods.

What should my toddler be drinking?

Offer about three cups (600mL) of milk each day – a little less if your toddler still has some breastfeeds.

Offer water at other times.

Some children may fill up on drinks and this leaves little room for solid foods. Give food before drinks at mealtimes.

Fruit juice is unnecessary. It is better to have pieces of whole fruit.

Drinks that are not suitable for your baby...

✗ **Reduced fat milks** are not recommended for children under two years because of their high energy needs.

✗ **Soft drinks** and **cordials** are high in sugar. Intake of these drinks has been linked to obesity and tooth decay.

✗ **Tea, herbal teas, coffee, chocolate drinks,** and **cola drinks** contain tannins and/or caffeine that are not suitable for children.

✗ **Energy drinks** claim to have 'energy enhancing ingredients' including vitamins, amino acids and caffeine/guarana in amounts that are not safe for children.



Prevent Choking...

Young children are at risk of choking

- ➔ Always stay with your child when he or she is eating
- ➔ Be a good role model and encourage your child to chew well and not to overfill their mouth
- ➔ Never force a child to eat, this may cause them to choke
- ➔ Popcorn, nuts, seeds, hard lollies, and corn chips are not suitable for young children
- ➔ Cook hard fruit and vegetables (eg. peas, beans, carrots and apple)
- ➔ Remove small bones and gristle from meat, fish or poultry
- ➔ Remove the skin from sausages

10 tips for feeding toddlers

- 1 Keep meals small and offer more if your child is still hungry
- 2 Give healthy snack foods between meals
- 3 Let your child feed him or herself
- 4 Give drinks in a cup
- 5 Let your child tell you when he or she is full. Don't force your toddler to finish all that's on the plate. Remember, appetites can vary so the amount your child eats can change from day to day
- 6 New foods may be rejected at first. Be patient and keep offering them at another time
- 7 Try a new food with other foods you know your child likes
- 8 Offer words of encouragement but don't force your child to eat. Try not to fuss if your child refuses food
- 9 Encourage your child to eat with the family and keep mealtimes relaxed and fun
- 10 Always supervise your child when he or she is eating.

“ **A normal toddler often eats less than when he or she was a baby because growth slows down.**

Babies grow very rapidly – a six month old baby may gain up to nearly one kilogram every eight weeks.

A toddler could take six months to gain one kilogram. ”



For more information...

Dietitians Association of Australia

www.daa.asn.au

Look for your local dietitian in the Yellow Pages.

Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) Hotline –

Toll free 1800 812 942

HealthInfo Line

Telephone 1300 135 030

Ngala Helpline

Telephone (08) 9368 9368

Toll free 1800 111 546 in WA only

www.ngala.com.au

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Recommended serves for toddlers (aged one to four years) have been developed by the Department of Health WA.



Department of
Health

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Local Contact