

Meal and Snack Ideas for Your Toddler

Helping your child eat well

Your guidance is important to help your child learn to eat a variety of healthy foods. Try the following ideas and suggestions for healthy meals and snacks for your family.



- Share the responsibility for eating:
 - Parents decide *what* food is served and *when*.
 - Children decide *whether* and *how much* to eat.
- Eat together as a family and set a good example by choosing a variety of healthy foods.
- Offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day to keep up with your toddler's high energy needs.
- For meals, choose from all 4 food groups: vegetables and fruit, milk products, grain products, and meat and meat alternatives.
- For snacks, choose from at least 2 food groups.
- Serve food, milk, and juice just at meal and snack times; offer water in between.
- Let children feed themselves.
- Know that it's normal for your child's appetite to change from day to day.
- Never force a child to eat or reward your child with food.
- Expect a mess – it's part of learning how to eat!

For more information, see BC HealthFile [69a](#) [Helping Your Toddler to Eat Well](#).

Cold meal and snack ideas

For cold meals and snacks, try some of these ideas:

- Whole grain, cold cereal with whole milk.
- Milk or yogurt shakes blended with fruit.
- Yogurt with fresh fruit pieces or applesauce.
- Yogurt with crackers or roti.

- Rice and raisin pudding with whole milk.
- Soft tofu pudding with fresh fruit.
- Sandwiches made with egg, tuna, or chicken salad.
- Sandwiches made with sliced cheese or tender meat.
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers.
- Small muffins and orange wedges.
- Whole grain crackers or rice cakes thinly spread with cottage cheese or mashed avocado.
- Banana or zucchini bread spread with cream cheese.
- Whole grain toast spread with peanut butter, fruit puree, or non-hydrogenated margarine or butter.
- Whole wheat pita and hummus.

Hot meal and snack ideas

For hot meals and snacks, try some of these ideas:

- Oatmeal or cream of wheat with whole milk.
- Pancakes or waffles topped with applesauce.
- Mini omelettes or scrambled eggs and toast.
- Congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat.
- Soft tortillas filled with beans or ground meat.
- Soups made with milk, and a whole grain bun.
- Vegetable, split pea, or bean soup with crackers.
- Fish chowder with bread sticks.
- Macaroni and cheese.
- Spaghetti with tomato or meat sauce.
- Meatballs with noodles.



- Chicken with vegetables.
- Rice or noodles and meat with vegetables.
- Fish served in a bun.
- Baked beans and toast.
- Chili or lentils, and rice.



Vegetable and fruit ideas

Try these vegetable and fruit ideas:

- Soft cooked vegetables, like carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, potato or beans, with dip or hummus.
- Grated carrots, beets or cabbage.
- Pieces of soft fruit with pits, seeds and tough skins removed, such as apples, banana, berries, kiwi, melon, peaches, pears or plums.
- Grapes cut length-wise into 4 pieces.
- Tomato or mixed vegetable juice.

What should a toddler drink?

Children are not always good at telling you that they are thirsty, and they can become dehydrated more easily than adults.

- Breastfeeding is recommended until children are 2 years of age or older. Breast milk provides protection against infection and other illnesses. Breastfed toddlers over 1 year of age need 200 IU of vitamin D from a supplement each day. Vitamin D supplements should continue until they drink 2 cups of whole milk daily.
- When weaning from breast milk or formula, offer 2-3 cups whole milk (homogenized) per day (500-750 mL).
- Toddlers need more fat than adults for brain development. Skim, 1%, 2% milks and fortified soy, rice or nut drinks are not recommended before 2 years of age.
- Offer water between meals and snacks to quench thirst.
- If your child has a bottle, fill it with water only.
- Fruit is a better choice for toddlers than juice.
- If juice is offered, limit to ½ to ¾ cup per day (125-200 mL). Offer only pasteurized 100% fruit or vegetable juice, and dilute it with water



to reduce the amount of sugar and acid on the teeth.

- Serve juice in a cup, never a bottle.
- Avoid fruit drinks and other drinks made from powders or crystals.

How can I help to prevent my child from choking?

- ***Always stay with children while they eat and drink.***
 - Make sure children sit down while eating.
 - Be a good role model by chewing your food well.
- Cook or grate hard vegetables like carrots.
- Chop fruit into small pieces, and remove pits.
- Debone fish and flake before serving.
- Cut grapes and hot dogs in 4 pieces lengthwise.
- Spread peanut butter *thinly* on toast or crackers.
- Do not serve hard or sticky foods such as:
 - nuts, seeds or popcorn;
 - hard candy, gum or marshmallows; and
 - peanut butter on a spoon.

For more information, contact your community nutritionist, or Dial-A-Dietitian at 604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-3438 to speak to a registered dietitian.



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