
Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers

Good habits for health, growth and development

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Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers

- Launched by the ITF in 2010
- Easy-to-use, practical tool
 - what food to offer toddlers
 - what behaviour to encourage
 - how best to manage mealtimes
- Consistent, simple advice for everyone with a responsibility for feeding toddlers.



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The toddler years (1-3 years) are a time of rapid change. After your child's first birthday he or she may:

- Show some food preferences – this might be for different textures, tastes and colours
- Like to feed himself or herself and be more independent
- Show sudden changes in food likes and dislikes
- Refuse to try new foods – this usually decreases as toddlers approach school age.

Try these ten steps for a healthy balance:

- 1. Eat together as a family and make mealtimes relaxed, happy occasions**
Make food easy to eat – finger foods are good. Eat the foods that you would like your toddler to eat. Praise your toddler when he or she eats well or tries something new – toddlers take time to learn to like new foods.
- 2. You decide which nutritious foods to offer but let your toddler decide how much to eat**
Never insist your toddler eats everything on his or her plate.
- 3. Offer foods from all 5 food groups each day**
Together they give the right mix of nutrients your toddler needs (see overleaf).
- 4. Have a routine and offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day**
Offer 2 courses at each meal and only offer nutritious snacks. Don't allow grazing on food.
- 5. Offer 6-8 drinks a day**
Give all drinks in a beaker or cup – not bottles. 3-4oz or 100-120ml is about right. Water is a good choice.
- 6. Give vitamins A & D each day**
Choose a vitamin supplement suitable for toddlers – most toddlers don't get enough in their food.
- 7. Respect your toddler's tastes and preferences – don't force feed**
Understand that some children eat almost everything while others are much more picky. Some like foods kept separate at a meal and others are happy with foods mixed in together.
- 8. Reward your toddler with your attention – never give food or drink as a reward, treat or for comfort**
Play, read or talk with your toddler as a reward. Always give fruit or a nutritious pudding – don't use it as a reward for eating other foods first or for good behaviour.
- 9. Limit...**
fried food, crisps, packet snacks, pastries, cakes and biscuits to very small amounts. Sweet foods to four times a day e.g. as part of the three meals and one snack.
...and avoid
sweetened fruit squashes, fizzy drinks, tea and coffee.
undiluted fruit juices – only give juice well diluted at meal times.
whole nuts which may cause choking or be inhaled.
- 10. Encourage physical activity for at least 3 hours every day and about 12 hours sleep**
All activity such as active play inside or outside, walking, running and dancing counts. Limit TV and other screen time like computers to just 1 hour a day.



1. Eat with the children in your groups and make mealtimes relaxed, happy occasions



- Make food easy to eat – finger foods are good
- Set a good example by eating the foods that you would like the children to eat
- Praise children when they eat well or try something new – young children take time to learn to like new foods.

2. You decide which nutritious foods to offer, taking account of individual dietary needs, but let children decide how much to eat



- Never insist that young children eat everything on their plates.

29% of parents say their toddlers have to finish all the foods on their plates

3. Offer foods from all 5 food groups each day



- Together they give the right mix of nutrients young children need.

4. Have a routine and offer 3 meals and 2–3 snacks over the whole day



- Offer 2 courses at each meal
- Only offer nutritious snacks
- Don't allow grazing on food.

66% of parents say that their toddlers have a set eating routine

5. Children need to be offered 6–8 drinks over a whole day



- Give all drinks in a beaker or cup – not bottles
- 3-4oz or 100-120ml is about right
- Water is a good choice
- Remember that fresh drinking water should be available at all times.

6. Encourage parents to give vitamins A & D each day



- Parents should choose a vitamin supplement suitable for toddlers
- Most toddlers don't get enough in their food.

Almost 60% of parents say they never give their toddlers vitamin supplements

7. Respect children's tastes and preferences... don't force feed



- Understand that some children eat almost everything while others are much more picky
- Some like foods kept separate at a meal and others are happy with foods mixed in together.

8. Reward young children with your attention – never give food or drink as a reward, treat or for comfort



- Play, read or talk to young children as a reward
- Always give fruit or a nutritious pudding – don't use it as a reward for eating other foods first or for good behaviour.

Over 70% of parents say they use sweet foods or puddings as a reward to encourage their toddler to eat their meals

9. Limit... and avoid



Limit...

- fried food, crisps, packet snacks, pastries, cakes and biscuits to very small amounts
- sweet foods to four times a day.

...and avoid

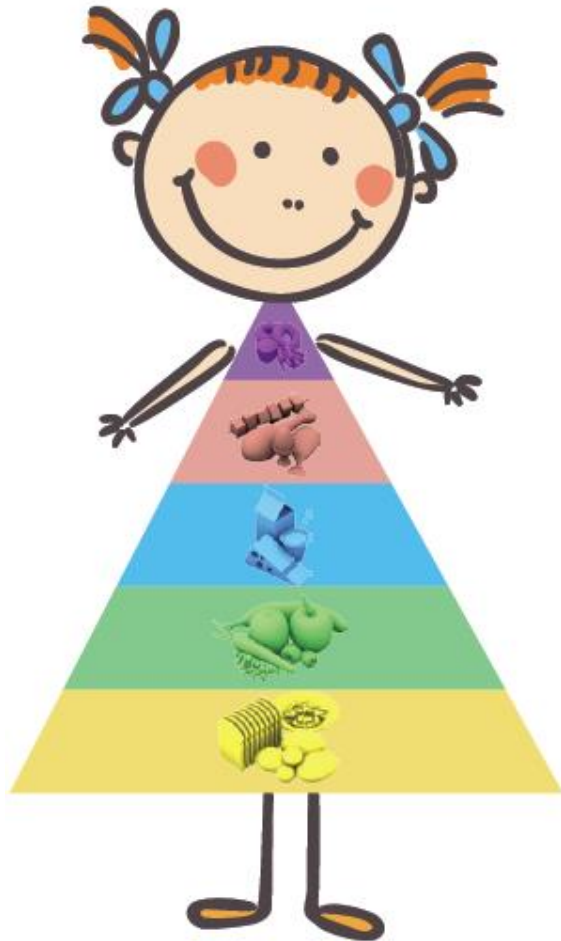
- sweetened fruit squashes, fizzy drinks, tea and coffee
- undiluted fruit juices
- whole nuts which may cause choking or be inhaled.

10. Encourage physical activity for at least 3 hours every day and about 12 hours sleep



- All activity such as active play, walking, running and dancing counts
- Encourage parents to limit TV and other screen time like computers to just 1 hour a day.

Food groups and portion ranges for toddlers



- We have devised evidence based portion ranges to give parents an idea of the quantities to offer toddlers

77% of parents say they have not received clear advice about portion sizes for toddlers

The Five Food Groups

One toddler-size portion is about:

<p>Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer at each meal and at some snacks• Choose whole grain often	<p>½–1 slice whole grain or white breads or ¼–¾ bread roll</p> <p>3–6 heaped Tbs whole grain or fortified breakfast cereals without a sugar coating. No need to add extra sugar – sweeten naturally with dried or fresh fruit</p> <p>5–8 Tbs of hot cereals like porridge made up with milk</p> <p>2–5 Tbs of rice or pasta</p> <p>½–1½ egg sized potatoes or 1–4 Tbs of mashed potato</p> <p>½–2 crispbreads or 1–3 crackers</p>
<p>Fruit and vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer at each meal and at some snacks	<p>¼–½ medium apple, orange, ¼–¾ pear or ¼–1 medium banana</p> <p>3–10 small berries or grapes</p> <p>2–4 Tbs raw, freshly cooked, stewed or mashed fruit</p> <p>1–3 Tbs raw or cooked vegetables, especially dark green, orange and yellow ones</p>
<p>Milk, cheese and yogurt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 toddler portions per day• No bottles of milk	<p>3–4 oz (100–120 ml) whole cows' milk as a drink in a cup</p> <p>1 small pot (125 ml) yogurt or 2 x 60g pots of fromage frais</p> <p>2–4 Tbs grated cheese</p> <p>Cheese in a sandwich or on a piece of pizza</p> <p>5–7 Tbs custard or 4–6 Tbs milk pudding</p> <p>Give whole milk rather than lower fat milks from 12 months of age until at least 2 years of age</p>
<p>Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 to 3 toddler portions per day	<p>2–4 Tbs ground, chopped or cubed lean meats, fish or poultry</p> <p>½–1 whole egg</p> <p>2–4 Tbs whole pulses (beans, lentils, dahl) or 1–2 Tbs hummus</p> <p>½–1 Tbs peanut butter or 1–2 Tbs ground or chopped nuts</p>
<p>Food and drinks high in fat and sugar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only include very small amounts	<p>½–1 digestive biscuit or 1–2 small biscuits</p> <p>1 small slice cake</p> <p>1 Tsp butter, oil or 1–2 Tsp mayonnaise</p> <p>1 Tsp jam, honey or sugar</p> <p>4–6 crisps or 2–4 sweets</p> <p>1 small fun-sized chocolate bar</p>