



## Feeding & Nutrition Tips: Your 2-Year-Old

With your two-year-old ([/English/ages-stages/Your-Childs-Checkups/Pages/your-checkup-checklist-24-months-2-Years-Old.aspx](#))'s blossoming language and social skills, they're ready to become an active mealtime participant. They should no longer be drinking from a bottle, and can eat the same food as the rest of the family. Their diet should now include three healthy meals ([/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx](#)) a day, plus one or two snacks ([/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Selecting-Snacks-for-Toddlers.aspx](#)).



Here are some tips to help your little one develop healthy, safe eating habits and get the nutrition their growing bodies need.

### Mealtime tips for toddlers

- Try not to fixate on amounts of food they are eating.
- Avoid making mealtimes a battle.
- Pay attention to adopting healthy eating habits—including sitting as a family ([/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Mealtime-as-Family-Time.aspx](#)) at mealtime.
- Focus on making healthy food choices ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx](#)) as a family.

### Unsafe foods for toddlers: choking risks

At two years old, your child should be able to use a spoon, drink from a cup with just one hand, and feed themselves a wide variety of finger foods. However, they are still learning to chew and swallow efficiently and may gulp food down when in a hurry to get on with playing. For that reason, the risk of choking ([/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Choking-Prevention.aspx](#)) at this age is high.

### Avoid these foods, which could be swallowed whole and block the windpipe:

- Hot dogs (unless cut in quarters lengthwise before being sliced)
- Chunks of peanut butter (Peanut butter may be spread thinly on bread or a cracker, but never give chunks of peanut butter to a toddler.)
- Nuts—especially peanuts
- Raw cherries with pits
- Round, hard candies—including jelly beans
- Gum
- Whole grapes
- Marshmallows

- Raw carrots, celery, green beans
- Popcorn
- Seeds—such as processed pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes (cut them in quarters)
- Large chunks of any food such as meat, potatoes, or raw vegetables and fruits

## Healthy eating basics & selective eaters (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/How-Do-I-Help-My-Picky-Eater-Try-More-Foods.aspx>)

The best foods for toddlers include:

- Protein foods like meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds and soy
- Dairy such as milk, yogurt, cheese or calcium-fortified soymilk
- Fruits and vegetables
- Grains such as whole wheat bread and oatmeal

It is normal for toddlers to choose from a limited number of foods, reject foods entirely, and then change their preferences over time. Never force your child to eat something they do not want to eat. The best approach is to let your child to choose from 2 to 3 healthy options, and continue to offer new foods as their tastes (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/How-Do-I-Help-My-Picky-Eater-Try-More-Foods.aspx>) change.

Offering a variety of foods and leaving the choices up to your child will eventually allow them to eat a balanced diet on their own. Toddlers also like to feed themselves (</English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Self-Feeding.aspx>). So, whenever possible, offer your child finger foods instead of cooked ones that require a fork or spoon to eat.

## Supplements for some children

Vitamin supplements (</English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Dietary-Supplements-for-Toddlers.aspx>) are rarely necessary for toddlers who eat a varied diet, with a few exceptions.

**Vitamin D.** Infants under 12 months of age require 400 International Units (IU) of vitamin D per day and older children and adolescents require 600 IU per day. This amount of vitamin D can prevent rickets (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Vitamin-D-Deficiency-and-Rickets.aspx>)—a condition characterized by the softening and weakening of bones. If your child is not regularly exposed to sunlight or is consuming enough vitamin D in their diet, talk to your pediatrician about a vitamin D supplement. See *Vitamin D for Babies, Children & Adolescents* (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Vitamin-D-On-the-Double.aspx>) for more information and a list of vitamin D-enriched foods.

**Iron.** Supplemental iron may be needed if your child eats very little meat, iron-fortified cereal, or vegetables rich in iron. Large quantities of milk (more than 32 ounces [960 mL] per day) also may interfere with the proper absorption of iron, increasing the risk of iron deficiency anemia (</English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Anemia-and-Your-Child.aspx>).

**Calcium.** Your child should drink 16 ounces (480 mL) of low-fat or nonfat milk each day. This will provide most of the calcium they need for bone growth and still not interfere with their appetite for other foods—particularly those that provide iron.

**Note:** Children stay on whole milk until they are two years of age—unless there is a reason to switch a baby to low-fat milk sooner. Whole milk contains approximately 4% milk fat. It may help to gradually switch your child from whole milk to a lower-fat milk. Therefore, many pediatricians recommend that children get reduced fat (2%) milk for a few weeks before switching them to low fat (1%) or no fat (skim) milk.

## More information

[mple Menu for a Two-Year-Old \(/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx)

- [Feeding & Nutrition Tips: Your 3-Year-Old \(/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Feeding-and-Nutrition-Your-Three-Year-Old.aspx\)](#) [Back to Top](#)
- [Selecting Snacks for Toddlers \(/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Selecting-Snacks-for-Toddlers.aspx\)](#)
- [I Need a Treat: How to Tame Your Child's Sweet Tooth \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/How-to-Tame-Your-Childs-Sweet-Tooth.aspx\)](#)
- [Diagnosis and Prevention of Iron Deficiency and Iron Deficiency Anemia in Infants and Young Children \(0-3 Years of Age\) \(http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/5/1040\) \(AAP Clinical Report\)](#)

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