



EAT
RIGHT
BE
ACTIVE

A Guide for Caregivers of
Toddlers 12 - 36 Months



NUTRITION RESOURCE CENTRE

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Introduction

We all want the best for our children. We want them to grow up healthy and feeling good about themselves.

This booklet can help. It has lots of everyday ideas for you, as the busy parent or caregiver of a toddler. Putting these ideas into action will help your child eat right and become active for life. Just remember, if you eat right and are active, your toddler will follow your lead! Be a good role model.

Note: In this booklet, “toddler” refers to children 12 - 36 months old. Both “him” and “her” are used throughout to describe your toddler. “Caregivers” refers to parents, other adult family members, or anyone else involved in your child’s day-to-day care. “Health care provider” refers to doctors, dietitians, nurses or other regulated health care providers.

Is my child growing well?

Children grow and develop at different rates. Your toddler may be taller or shorter, lighter or heavier than other toddlers of the same age.

What is most important is the overall growth pattern, not the height or weight at any one time. Ask about the growth pattern of your child when you are visiting his health care provider.

If you are concerned about your child’s eating habits, or growth and development, check out the nutrition screen tool called Nutri-eSTEP (www.nutritionscreen.ca) to get more information. The toddler version is made for children 18 - 36 months of age.

Growth depends on many factors

- Family - parents’ size and shape
- Age - children grow fastest as babies and teenagers
- General health - medical conditions, illnesses, medications
- Gender - boys and girls have different growth patterns
- Eating habits - what and how much your child eats
- Activity level - how active your child is, and for how long

Adapted from: *A Health Professional’s Guide for using the WHO Growth Charts for Canada*, Dietitians of Canada, 2014

GOOD TO
KNOW!

Eat right, be active quiz

What is considered “normal” eating and activity for a toddler may surprise you. Answer the following questions with a **Yes** or **No**.

1. Are mealtimes with toddlers usually messy?

Yes No

As your toddler learns to feed herself, mealtimes will be messy. Some food will make it into her mouth but some may also be on the floor, her face and her hands. She also learns to feed herself by watching you, so eat together often. Let her do most of it herself and don't get upset by the mess. The more she practices, the more skilled she will become.

2. Does playing with my toddler count as physical activity?

Yes No

Playing with your toddler is an important and fun way to get her active. One of the best ways to involve your child in active play is to go outside where she can make up her own games that involve running, jumping, exploring and climbing. Indoors, use music to inspire her to move. The key is to move more and avoid long periods of being still.

3. My toddler seems less interested in eating since he turned one. Is this normal?

Yes No

It is normal for a toddler's appetite to go up and down. Trust him to know how much to eat at meal and snack times. If you try to make him eat more, he will likely eat less. Serve him a variety of healthy foods. Offer less than you think he will eat and let him ask for more.

4. Is physical activity important in the first years of life for healthy growth and development?

Yes No

Being physically active every day is very important for your toddler. The basic skills he learns now will make it easier to master more difficult skills later. His posture, confidence, flexibility and bone strength will also improve.

5. Should I serve my 12-month-old toddler homogenized milk (3.25% M.F.)?

Yes No

Breastfeeding is encouraged until 24 months or longer. If your child is not breastfed, offer homogenized (3.25% M.F.) cow's milk until 24 months of age. At 24 months, switch to skim, 1% or 2% milk. Offer 500 mL (2 cups) of milk each day. Do not offer more than 750 mL (3 cups) per day. Find out more about milk on page 8.

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