

BALLESTRINI'S EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Family Connection

Toddler Nutrition: A Guide to Healthy Eating



This Issue will cover tips for Weaning, Balanced Diets, and Combating Picky Eating

Ensuring your toddler gets the proper nutrition is key to supporting their growth and development. This guide provides essential information on transitioning from the bottle, meeting nutritional needs, and making mealtimes enjoyable for even the pickiest eaters.

Toddler Nutritional Needs

Nutrient	Daily Requirement	Sources
Calories	1,000–1,400 kcal/day	Whole foods, healthy fats, balanced meals
Protein	13g/day	Meat, eggs, beans, yogurt
Fat	30–40% of total calories	Avocados, nuts, olive oil
Carbohydrates	~130g/day	Fruits, vegetables, whole grains
Fiber	19g/day	Whole grains, legumes, veggies
Fluids	~4 cups/day	Water, whole milk

Weaning from the Bottle

Goal: Transition off the bottle by **12-14 months**

- ✓ **Start early:** Introduce a cup with water at meals starting at **6 months**.
- ✓ **Balanced diet:** Ensure a variety of foods from all food groups.
- ✓ **Gradual elimination:** Remove one bottle at a time, starting with midday bottles.
- ✓ **Milk intake:** Limit whole milk to **16-20 oz per day** to prevent iron absorption issues.
- ✓ **Increase portion sizes:** Babies compensate for lost calories from formula/breast milk.
- ✓ **Hydration matters:** Offer **4 cups of fluids per day** (mostly water and milk).
- ✓ **No need to stress about milk refusal:** Calcium and vitamin D are found in **yogurt, cheese, and other dairy sources**.
- ✓ **Avoid sugary drinks:** Juice is not recommended. Stick to **water and milk**.

Choosing the Right Cup

Not All Cups Are Created Equal!

Straw cups are recommended for proper oral development. They promote safe eating habits, reduce picky eating, and support early speech.

Click Here for a spill-proof, easy-to-clean straw cup that encourages independent drinking.

Skip the Sippy Cup!

CHANGES THE SWALLOW PATTERN TO A LESS MATURE SWALLOW

ENCOURAGES A FORWARD RESTING TONGUE POSITION, OR TONGUE THRUST

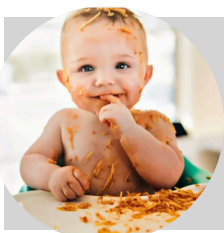
ENCOURAGES OPEN MOUTH POSTURE AT REST

IMPACTS SPEECH SOUND DEVELOPMENT DUE TO A TONGUE THRUST

IMPACTS TEETH DEVELOPMENT AND REDUCES APPETITE CUES

Signs of Readiness for Self-Feeding

As toddlers grow, they develop important motor skills that help them feed themselves. Signs that your toddler is ready to self-feed include: **Improved pincer grasp** (picking up small pieces of food between fingers). **Ability to chew and swallow a variety of textures**. **Interest in holding a spoon or fork**. **Reaching for food on their plate**.



Combating Picky Eating



Create a Positive Mealtime Environment

- Avoid pressuring your child to eat, as this can create negative associations with food. Instead, allow them to decide how much they want to eat. Making meals fun by using colorful presentations and different shapes can also encourage interest in food. Patience is key—toddlers often need multiple exposures before accepting new foods.

Offer a Variety of Foods – Introducing different textures and flavors can help toddlers expand their palate. If they dislike a particular food, try offering it in different preparations, such as steaming, roasting, or mixing it into another dish they enjoy.

Model Healthy Eating – Toddlers love to imitate, so show them that you enjoy a variety of healthy foods. Eating meals together as a family helps reinforce positive eating habits.

Involve Them in Meal Prep – Letting toddlers participate in simple tasks like washing vegetables, stirring, or arranging food on their plate can make them more excited to try new foods.

Serve Meals Regularly – Keeping a consistent schedule for meals and snacks helps regulate hunger and ensures your child is ready to eat at mealtimes. Limiting snacks between meals can also prevent them from filling up on less nutritious foods.

Avoid Making Special Meals – If your toddler refuses a meal, resist the urge to prepare something different just for them. Instead, continue offering the same meal with a variety of options while ensuring there's at least one food they like on their plate.

Respect Their Appetite – Some days your child may eat more, and some days less. Trust their hunger cues and avoid forcing them to eat when they're not hungry.

Keep Offering New Foods – Even if your toddler refuses a food once, continue offering it in small amounts without pressure. It can take 10-15 exposures before a child becomes comfortable with a new food.

Keep Mealtimes Calm and Relaxed – Avoid distractions, stress, or rushing during meals. A positive and pressure-free environment helps your toddler feel comfortable exploring new foods.

Don't Give Up on Healthy Foods – Persistence is key! Even if your child rejects a food multiple times, continue offering it in different ways. Over time, their tastes and willingness to try new foods will improve.

Encouraging toddlers to eat what the family eats helps prevent picky eating habits. Offer the same meals in toddler-friendly portions and textures, modifying as needed for safety. Eating together as a family also promotes social skills and positive mealtime habits.

Foods to Avoid

Some foods can pose choking hazards or are not recommended for toddlers under age two:

- ✗ Whole grapes
- ✗ Popcorn
- ✗ Whole nuts
- ✗ Large chunks of meat
- ✗ Hot dogs (unless sliced lengthwise and quartered)
- ✗ Sticky foods (marshmallows, spoonfuls of peanut butter)
- ✗ Excessively salty or sugary foods

Sample Feeding Schedule

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, whole wheat toast, sliced strawberries + 4 oz water/milk

Lunch: Shredded chicken, brown rice, steamed green beans + 4 oz water/milk

Snack: Yogurt, whole grain crackers, quartered grapes + 4 oz water/milk

Dinner: Meatballs, whole wheat pasta, cooked carrots + 4 oz water/milk

Suggested Food Lists:

Fruits: Bananas, Mandarin Oranges, Peaches, Pears, Blueberries, Strawberries, Grapes, Apples, Applesauce, Avocado

Vegetables: Green Beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Peas, Squash, Zucchini, Sweet Potato, Spinach, Potato, Yams

Protein: Chicken, Beef, Eggs, Tuna, Beans, Hummus, Meatballs, Pork, Turkey, Peanut Butter (if no allergies)

Dairy: Whole Milk, Yogurt, Cheese, Cottage Cheese

Carbohydrates: Whole Wheat Pasta, Brown Rice, Whole Grain Crackers, Whole Grain Pancakes, Whole Grain Waffles, Whole Wheat Muffins, Whole Grain Bread, Whole Grain Cereal



Hydration Beyond Milk

Ensuring adequate hydration is essential for digestion and overall health. Offer water frequently throughout the day, especially after meals. Avoid sugary drinks like juice and flavored milks, as they can contribute to excessive sugar intake and dental

"TODDLERS: THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN GO FROM 'STARVING' TO 'FULL' IN ONE BITE!"