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## Ages & Stages

### Feeding and Nutrition: Your One-Year-Old



You'll probably notice a sharp drop in your toddler's appetite after his first birthday. Suddenly he's picky about what he eats, turns his head away after just a few bites, or resists coming to the table at mealtimes. It may seem as if he should be eating more now that he's so active, but there's a good reason for the change. His growth rate has slowed, and he really doesn't require as much food now.

Your toddler needs about 1,000 calories a day to meet his needs for growth, energy, and good nutrition. If you've ever been on a 1,000-calorie diet, you know it's not a lot of food. But your child will do just fine with it, divided among three small meals and two snacks a day. Don't count on his always eating it that way, however, because the eating habits of toddlers are erratic and unpredictable from one day to the next. He may eat everything in sight at breakfast but almost nothing else for the rest of the day. Or he may eat only his favorite food for three days in a row, and then reject it entirely. Or he may eat 1,000 calories one day, but then eat noticeably more or less on the subsequent day or two. Your child's needs will vary, depending on his activity level, his growth rate, and his metabolism.

As a general rule, it's a real mistake to turn mealtimes into sparring matches to get him to eat a balanced diet. He's not rejecting you when he turns down the food you prepared, so don't take it personally. Besides, the harder you push him to eat, the less likely he is to comply. Instead, offer him a selection of nutritious foods at each sitting, and let him choose what he wants. Vary the tastes and consistencies as much as you can.

If he rejects everything, you might try saving the plate for later when he's hungry. However, don't allow him to fill up on cookies or sweets after refusing his meal, since that will just fuel his interest in empty-calorie foods (those that are high in calories but relatively low in important nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals) and diminish his appetite for nutritious ones. Hard as it may be to believe, your child's diet will balance out over several days if you make a range of wholesome foods available and don't pressure him to eat a particular one at any given time.

Your toddler needs foods from the same four basic nutrition groups that you do:

1. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
2. Dairy products
3. Fruits and vegetables
4. Cereal grains, potatoes, rice, breads, pasta

When planning your child's menu, remember that cholesterol and other fats are very important for his normal growth and development, so they should not be restricted during this period. Babies and young toddlers should get about half of their calories from fat. You can gradually decrease the fat consumption once your child has reached the age of two (lowering it to about one-third of daily calories by ages four to five). While you should not lose sight of the fact that childhood obesity is a growing problem, youngsters in the second year of life need dietary fat. If you keep your child's caloric intake at about 1,000 calories a day, you shouldn't have to worry about overfeeding him and putting him at risk of gaining too much weight.

By his first birthday, your child should be able to handle most of the foods you serve the rest of the family—but with a few

precautions. First, be sure the food is cool enough so that it won't burn his mouth. Test the temperature yourself, because he'll dig in without considering the heat. Also, don't give him foods that are heavily spiced, salted, buttered, or sweetened. These additions prevent your child from experiencing the natural taste of foods, and they may be harmful to his long-term good health.

Young children seem to be more sensitive than adults to these flavorings and may reject heavily spiced foods.

Your little one can still choke on chunks of food that are large enough to plug his airway. Keep in mind that children don't learn to chew with a grinding motion until they're about four years old. In his second year of life, make sure anything you give him is mashed or cut into small, easily chewable pieces. Never offer him peanuts, whole grapes, cherry tomatoes (unless they're cut in quarters), carrots, seeds (i.e., processed pumpkin or sunflower seeds), whole or large sections of hot dogs, meat sticks, or hard candies (including jelly beans or gummy bears), or chunks of peanut butter (it's fine to thinly spread peanut butter on a cracker or bread). Hot dogs and carrots in particular should be quartered lengthwise and then sliced into small pieces. Also make sure your toddler eats only while seated and supervised by an adult. Although he may want to do everything at once, "eating on the run" or while talking increases his risk of choking. Teach him as early as possible to finish a mouthful prior to speaking.

By his first birthday or soon thereafter, your toddler should drink his liquids from a cup. He'll need less milk now, since he'll get most of his calories from solid foods.

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