

feeding your toddler

Food Standards Agency Publications

To order further copies of this or other publications produced by the Agency, contact Food Standards Agency Publications:

tel **0845 606 0667**
minicom **0845 606 0678**
fax **020 8867 3225**
email **foodstandards@eclogistics.co.uk**

Other titles in this series

Thinking of having a baby	FSA/0452/0602
Eating while you are pregnant	FSA/0451/0602
Eating for breastfeeding	FSA/0453/0602
Feeding your baby	FSA/0454/0602
Feeding your growing child	FSA/0456/0602
Men and food	FSA/0458/0602
Eating for later life	FSA/0457/0602

Published by the Food Standards Agency 2002.

Front cover photography: Janine Wiedel.

© Crown copyright 2002

Printed in England 20k FSA/0455/0602



giving your
child a healthy
balanced diet



FOOD
STANDARDS
AGENCY

Contents

What should my toddler be eating?	1
Can my toddler eat the same food as us?	2
Semi-skimmed and skimmed milk	4
Vegetarian diets	5
What foods should be avoided?	6
Sweet drinks	7
Where can I get more information?	8

Just like adults, young children need food for energy, as well as for nutrients such as protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. This is to make sure their bodies work properly and can repair themselves. Here is some practical advice to help you make some healthy food choices for your toddler.

Q What should my toddler be eating?

A At this age, children are growing very quickly and are usually very active, so they need plenty of calories and nutrients. A healthy and varied diet should provide all the nutrients your toddler needs.

Remember to include these sorts of foods every day:

- milk and dairy foods – these provide calories, protein, vitamins and minerals
- meat, fish and alternatives such as eggs, beans, peas and lentils – these are rich in nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals
- bread, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, and potatoes, yams and sweet potatoes – these starchy foods provide calories, vitamins, minerals and fibre
- fruit and vegetables – these contain vitamin C, and other protective vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre



Q Can my toddler eat the same food as us?

A Toddlers can eat the same food as adults but, before they're two years old, children can't eat large amounts of food at one sitting.

So, until then, it's especially important to give your child meals and snacks packed with calories and nutrients (sometimes called 'nutrient-dense foods') such as:

- full-fat milk and dairy foods
- meat
- eggs

Don't forget to give your toddler fruit and vegetables and starchy foods as well.



If you tend to eat high-fibre foods, remember that young children's stomachs can't cope with foods such as wholemeal pasta and brown rice. Also, too much fibre can sometimes reduce the amount of minerals they can absorb, such as calcium and iron.

By the time they're five years old, young children should be eating family food, which is more bulky because it contains lots of starchy foods and plenty of fruit and vegetables. But make sure it doesn't contain too much saturated fat, which is found in butter, hard-fat spreads, cheese, fatty meat and meat products, biscuits, pastry and cakes.



Semi-skimmed and skimmed milk

When your toddler is two years old, if he or she is eating well and getting plenty of calories and nutrients from a varied diet, then you can start giving your toddler semi-skimmed milk.

Fully skimmed milk isn't suitable as a main drink until a child is five years old because it doesn't contain enough calories or vitamins.



Vegetarian diets

If you're giving your toddler a vegetarian diet it's important to make sure it's balanced and includes foods rich in nutrients, such as milk, cheese and eggs. This means their diet won't be too bulky and they'll get plenty of protein, vitamin A, calcium and zinc.

Iron is found in many vegetables and pulses (such as beans, lentils and chick peas), in dried fruit (such as apricots, raisins and sultanas), and in some breakfast cereals.

But iron is more difficult to absorb from vegetable sources than from meat, so:

- give your toddler foods containing iron each day
- try to give food or drink high in vitamin C, such as fruit, vegetables or fruit juice, at the same time as foods containing iron because this makes it easier to absorb the iron
- don't give young children tea or coffee, especially at mealtimes, because this reduces the amount of iron they can absorb

Q What foods should be avoided?

A Take care to avoid the following foods:

- Don't give raw eggs, or food that contains raw or partially cooked eggs, to your toddler because of the risk of salmonella, which causes a type of food poisoning. If you give eggs to your toddler, make sure the eggs are cooked until both the white and the yolk are solid.
- Don't give whole nuts to children under five years old because of the risk of choking. It's a good idea always to crush or flake them.
- Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin because these types of fish have been shown to contain relatively high levels of methylmercury, which might affect children's developing nervous systems.
- There's no need to add salt, sugar or honey to food for your toddler.



Sweet drinks

Try not to give your toddler fizzy drinks and fruit squash because these drinks cause tooth decay. They can also fill children up so they don't eat enough food to get the nutrients they need.

If you do give fruit squash or sugary drinks to your toddler:

- make sure you dilute the drinks well with water
- keep these drinks to mealtimes
- between meals it's better to give water or milk to drink

Q Where can I get more information?

- A Your health visitor or GP can give you more information. You might also be interested in the booklet *Feeding your growing child*, which is published by the Food Standards Agency in this series.

You can find out more about food at www.food.gov.uk



www.food.gov.uk/toddler