

Eating Well

Eating well is key to your toddler's healthy growth and development. Children who eat well from an early age have the best chance of becoming healthy eaters for life.

You can encourage healthy eating by:

- breastfeeding or chestfeeding or giving your child expressed milk for 2 years or longer
- introducing solid foods at about 6 months
- working towards 3 meals and 2 or 3 sit-down snacks at regular times each day
- providing a variety of nutritious foods
- watching for your toddler's cues to see when they're hungry or full
- creating a calm, no-pressure eating environment
- eating together as a family
- offering attention, affection and playtime – not food or drink – as comfort
- modelling healthy eating habits
- ensuring other caregivers know your feeding routines



KEY TAKEAWAY

Your toddler's appetite will vary from day to day. By letting them decide how much to eat, you'll teach them to listen to their body. If you're concerned about your child's eating or growth, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak with a registered dietitian.

Mealtime Roles

You and your toddler each have a role to play in healthy eating.

Your role is to:

- ✓ offer a variety of healthy foods
- ✓ offer meals and snacks at regular times each day
- ✓ respond to your toddler's hunger and fullness cues

Your toddler's role is to:

- ✓ choose whether to eat
- ✓ choose what to eat from what they're offered
- ✓ choose how much to eat



DID YOU KNOW?

By doing your job with feeding and trusting your toddler to do their job with eating, you'll help them become a healthy eater and have less conflict around mealtime.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your toddler is often not hungry at mealtimes, they may be filling up on drinks. More than 3 cups (750 ml) of cow's milk per day leaves little room for food.

Hunger and Fullness Cues

What are hunger and fullness cues?

Signs your young toddler gives you when they know they're hungry or full.

Your toddler is hungry if, when food is offered, they:

- open their mouth
- lean forward excitedly, kick their feet or wave their hands

Your toddler is full if, when food is offered, they:

- push it away
- close their mouth
- turn their head away

When Your Toddler Says No to Food

If your older toddler won't eat, let them leave the table. They may not be hungry, or they may be tired, excited or sick. Wait until the next regular meal or snack time to offer anything more. And resist the urge to use desserts or other treats as bribes for finishing food.



BRAIN BUILDER

By sitting down to eat together, you'll build your toddler's language and social skills while encouraging healthy eating habits.