



Toddler Diet Factsheet

For UK toddlers to get the right nutrients they need to grow and develop properly, it is important that they have a balanced diet containing certain portions from the five food groups.

Recommendations for toddlers

The toddler years are a critical time of development when children are forming eating habits for life. However, there are still only a few toddler-specific nutritional guidelines in existence. The Infant and Toddler Forum provides guidance on nutrition, healthy diets and portion sizes for children aged one and up. Find the website address overleaf.



Bread, rice, potatoes and other starchy foods

This group acts as the main source of energy in a toddler's diet, providing them with the carbohydrates they need. This group includes bread, cereals, pasta, rice, potatoes, noodles, chapatti and other starchy foods.



Fruit and vegetables

This food group is a very important source of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and fibre. A diet that's rich in fruit and vegetables can reduce the risk of heart attack,¹ stroke and cancer in later life.²



Milk, cheese and yogurt

This group of foods provides many nutrients – they're important sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, especially calcium, which is essential for healthy teeth and bones. This group includes milk and milk products, such as cheese, paneer, yogurt and fromage frais. It excludes butter, margarine and cream as these are part of the 'foods and drinks high in fats and/or sugar' group.



Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses

This food group provides the protein that toddlers need for the growth and repair of their body tissues. Red meat is a particularly good source of iron, zinc and essential amino acids. Eggs and oily fish, like mackerel and sardines, provide essential fatty acids and vitamin D. Having a vitamin C rich food or drink – say broccoli or orange juice – with an iron-rich meal can boost iron absorption.³



Foods & drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Foods from this group, such as sweets or fizzy drinks, should be enjoyed as an occasional treat. Too much fat or sugar can lead to dental issues⁴ and serious health problems later in life, such as diabetes and obesity.

Quantities and portion sizes for toddlers

For adults and children over five, a diet based on the eatwell plate is important to make sure that we obtain the wide range of nutrients we need. Before the age of five, children should gradually be moving towards eating the same foods as the rest of the family, in the proportions shown on the eatwell plate opposite. However, they still have different nutritional needs from adults. Specific guidance on portion sizes for the under fives is given below.



A diet containing foods from each of the five food groups, in correct combinations, will provide sufficient amounts of most nutrients.

Providing toddlers with a balanced diet rich in nutrients is important for optimal health but even with a varied diet, a toddler doesn't always get enough of the nutrients they need.

Their intake of some nutrients can be improved by including Growing Up Milk as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Portion sizes

Fruit and vegetables

Should be eaten each mealtime and as some snacks.

- ¼-½ apple or orange, ¼-¾ pear or ¼-1 banana.
- 3-10 small berries or grapes.
- 2-4 tbsp raw, freshly stewed or mashed fruit.
- 1-3 tbsp of raw or cooked vegetables, in a variety of colours.

Milk, cheese and yogurt

3 dairy servings per day.

- 100-120ml whole cow's milk as a drink.
- 150ml Growing Up Milk.
- 1 average pot (125ml) yogurt or 2 small pots (60g) fromage frais.
- 2-4 tbsp grated cheese in a sandwich or on a piece of pizza.
- 4-7 tbsp custard or a milk pudding.

Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses

2-3 servings per day.

- 1-2 small slices lean meat.
- 2-5 tbsp minced meat.
- ¼-1 medium sausage.
- 1½-4 slices wafer thin ham.
- 1-3 tbsp white or fresh oily fish.
- ½-1½ tbsp tinned fish.
- ½-1 whole egg.
- 2-4 tbsp whole or mashed pulses (beans, hummus, dahl).
- ½-1 tbsp peanut butter or 1-2 tbsp ground or chopped nuts.

Food & drinks high in fat and sugar

Only small amounts.

- ½-1 digestive biscuit.
- ½-1 slice fruitcake.
- 1 tsp butter, mayonnaise or oil.
- 1 tsp jam, honey or sugar.
- 2-4 sweets.
- 1 small fun-sized chocolate bar.
- 4-6 crisps.

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Should be eaten at each meal and can be a snack option.

- ½-1 slice whole grain or white bread.
- 3-6 heaped tbsp whole grain or fortified breakfast cereals without a sugar coating. If required, sweeten naturally with dried or fresh fruit.
- 5-8 tbsp of hot cereals like porridge made up with milk.
- 2-5 tbsp of rice or pasta.
- ½-1½ egg-sized potatoes, 1-4 tbsp of mashed potato or 2-4 medium wedges.

References:

1. Viikari J, Niinikoski H, Raitakari OT, Simell O. The initiatives and outcomes for cardiovascular risks that can be achieved through paediatric counselling. *Curr Opin Lipidol*. 2009 Feb;20(1):17-23. doi: 10.1097/MOL.0b013e32831b4685.
2. Reduce your cancer risk - NHS Choices. Available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/preventing-cancer/Pages/diet-and-cancer.aspx> [Accessed June 2013].
3. Hallberg L, Brune M, Rossander L. The role of vitamin C in iron absorption. *Int J Vitam Nutr Res Suppl*. 1989; 30: 103-8.
4. Department of Health. Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom, TSO (1991)73-74.

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Healthy eating, visit
www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

Contact our free expert helpline on
0800 996 1234 or visit www.eln.nutricia.co.uk