



Meal and Snack Ideas for Your 1 to 3 Year Old Child

What foods do I offer my child to eat?

Offer your child the same healthy foods that you and the rest of your family enjoy. Give your child foods with different flavours and textures. Include a variety of:

1. Vegetables and fruits
2. Whole grain foods
3. Protein foods

Make sure that the foods you offer are prepared with little or no added salt or sugar. Include foods that are higher in healthy fat like salmon, avocado and nut butters.

To learn how to help your child eat, see [HealthLinkBC File #69d Helping Your 1 to 3 Year Old Child Eat Well](#).

What do I offer my child to drink?

You can continue to offer your child breastmilk until they are 2 years of age or older.

- If your child no longer breastfeeds, offer 500 mL (2 cups) of pasteurized whole cow milk (3.25% Milk Fat) with meals and snacks. If your child does not drink cow milk, talk to your health care provider about what you can offer
- When your child is 2 years old, you can start to offer lower fat milk options such as skim, 1% or 2%. You can also give unsweetened fortified soy beverage. Limit milk or soy beverage to no more than 750 mL (3 cups) every day

Water is the best beverage when your child is thirsty. Offer water in between meals and snacks.

Children do not need sugary drinks such as pop, sports drinks, sweetened milk, sweetened fortified soy beverage, 100% fruit juice, fruit beverages and fruit flavored drinks made from powders or crystals.

All fruit juice, including 100% fruit juice, are high in sugar and low in fibre. Offer your child whole fruit instead.

What are some snack ideas for my child?

- Whole grain cereal or oatmeal with milk
- Bite-sized pieces of leftover cooked beef, chicken or tofu and soft cooked vegetables
- Milk or yogurt-based fruit smoothies in an open cup
- Plain yogurt with pieces of soft fresh fruit
- Applesauce with whole grain crackers or roti
- Grated or small cubes of cheese with whole grain crackers
- A small whole grain muffin with fresh fruit
- Small amount of nut or seed butter spread thinly on whole grain crackers
- Mashed avocado on whole grain toast
- Yogurt and fruit popsicles
- Whole grain pita bread triangles and bean dip

What are some meal ideas for my child?

- Sandwich triangles made with egg, tuna or chicken salad, served with chopped fruit
- Hummus, whole wheat pita and soft cooked and cooled vegetables
- Brown rice with cooked pieces of fish and peas
- Oatmeal served with milk and soft apples
- Whole grain pancakes or waffles topped with thinly spread nut butter and fruit
- Mini omelets or scrambled eggs with cooked vegetables and whole grain toast
- Cooked tofu pieces, sweet potatoes and whole grain pasta
- Congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat, chicken or fish

- Whole grain tortillas filled with beans or ground meat and tomato sauce
- Vegetable, split pea or bean soup served with whole grain crackers or a whole grain bun
- Fish chowder with whole grain bread sticks
- Whole grain macaroni and cheese with tuna and peas
- Whole grain pasta with tomato or meat sauce
- Chicken, beef, pork or tofu cut in small pieces stir-fried with soft cooked vegetables and brown rice
- Baked beans with soft taco or whole grain toast
- Chili and whole wheat or corn bread
- Dahl or lentils with chopped tomatoes and whole grain rice
- Soft veggies, tomato sauce and grated cheese on a whole wheat pita, pizza shell or English muffin

How do I help my young child eat safely?

Children under the age of 4 are at higher risk of choking than older children and adults. They have small airways and less control over swallowing. Always stay with your child while they eat and drink. Avoid feeding your child in a moving vehicle or in a stroller.

To prevent choking:

- Watch your child and make sure they sit down to eat or drink
- Encourage them to take small bites and to chew the food well
- Cook or grate hard vegetables like carrots
- Chop soft fruit into small pieces. Remove pits, seeds and tough skins before serving
- Remove any bones from fish and flake before serving. You can rub fish between your fingers to find and remove bones
- Cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes and hot dogs lengthwise first and then into pieces
- Spread smooth peanut butter thinly on toast or crackers or stir into warm cooked cereal
- Do not feed your child foods with toothpicks or skewers

Do not give your child:

- Whole peanuts, nuts, seeds or popcorn
- Whole grapes
- Fish with bones
- Dried fruit such as raisins
- Hard candy or cough drops
- Gum or marshmallows
- Peanut butter, nut or seed butters on a spoon

For more information about choking in babies and young children, see [HealthLinkBC File #110b Preventing Choking in Babies and Young Children: For Child Care Providers.](#)

How do I prepare food safely?

Young children are at increased risk of food-borne illness. Bacteria such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Listeria* are killed when foods are heated to safe cooking temperatures. To avoid food-borne illness, do not offer your child:

- Raw or undercooked meat, fish or poultry. Make sure that meat, fish and poultry are cooked to safe internal temperatures
- Raw or lightly cooked eggs. These may be in homemade mayonnaise, sauces and dressings or homemade ice cream
- Unpasteurized milk or dairy products or unpasteurized juice
- Raw sprouts, such as alfalfa, clover, radish and mung beans. Only offer thoroughly cooked sprouts.

What if my child has food allergies?

If you have questions or concerns about food allergies, talk to your child's doctor, pediatrician, a registered dietitian or a public health nurse.

For More Information

For more information on feeding your child, see Toddler's First Steps at www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2019/TFS-3rd-edition-FINAL-Nov2019.pdf (PDF 14.46 MB)