

# GROWING LEAPS AND BOUNDS<sup>®</sup>

SERIES: 8 OF 12



A GUIDE TO HEALTHY FEEDING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FROM INFANCY TO PRESCHOOL YEARS

## FEEDING AND EATING

Parenting a toddler means finding the balance... between allowing your child more independence and giving him consistent guidance and direction. Remember that you are in charge of your child's menu – you decide which foods to serve. Your child decides how much to eat, or even if he will eat them each day. Just keep offering!

### Until Your Next Well-Child Visit...

- Continue to serve toddler-size portions.
- Play with your toddler for at least one hour every day; avoid sitting still for long periods of time.
- Try to keep your cool with picky eating and fussy behavior.



## YOUR FUSSY TODDLER

Has your 18-month-old transformed from a terrific eater into a terrible one? Rest assured that your cooking is not the cause! She's just being normal! Your toddler is beginning to take charge of her world, and whether or not to eat is one of the few things she can control. Follow these feeding strategies to help make mealtime go more smoothly:

- 1 Offer simple food choices, like between a piece of banana and a piece of apple for a snack. This will help empower her and avoid struggles.
- 2 Expand your toddler's "food world" by continuing to pair new foods with foods your child already likes.
- 3 Place small amounts of food on the plate, and do not overfill it. Your toddler's stomach is about the size of her fist. Also, serving too much food may discourage her from eating.
- 4 Allow your toddler to leave food on the plate. Appetites and food choices change daily, so don't be concerned when it seems like she "eats like a bird" one day and "eats like a horse" the next.
- 5 Don't force a child to eat, even if she misses a meal, and don't feel obligated to cook an extra meal. She will catch up at the next regular meal.
- 6 Avoid using any type of food as a bribe or reward. Trying to get your toddler to eat her veggies by offering dessert as a reward will only backfire, as it communicates to your child that veggies are less desirable than dessert.
- 7 When you serve dessert, choose from a variety of foods, like fresh or canned fruits or a yogurt smoothie. Keep portions small. You don't have to serve dessert every day.
- 8 Help your child learn to eat slowly by serving and eating meals together in a calm, relaxed manner. This may help her become more in touch with her appetite.
- 9 Avoid turning the dinner table into a battleground.

**INSTEAD OF...** Your child may not like certain foods, but usually you can find a substitute with similar nutritional value. Here are a few smart food swaps:

- Instead of carrots, serve a sweet potato or butternut squash.
- Instead of broccoli, serve mango or cantaloupe.
- Instead of beef, serve dark turkey or chicken meat.
- Instead of milk (if he refuses to drink it), serve yogurt, cheese, calcium-fortified juice, or calcium-fortified soy milk.
- Instead of cheese, serve small tofu cubes.



## WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR GOOD LITTLE EATER?

Toddlers do get picky. But don't start changing the menu. The child who gets his way might become even pickier. Keep doing what you're doing – serve a couple of familiar foods, plus a food or two that your child hasn't tried before. Here are a few creative meal and snack ideas to try. Remember to keep portions small:

### BREAKFAST

- Scrambled egg with a little grated cheese in a mini-pita
- Corn muffin spread with cream cheese
- Breakfast cereal "trail mix" (toss together a couple of different types of cereal, including oat rings or another whole-grain cereal)
- Wheat toast triangles, lightly buttered and spread with jam



### LUNCH

- "Parfait" with layers of cottage cheese or yogurt, and chopped fruit
- Chicken salad with whole-wheat crackers or pita wedges
- Cooked broccoli florets and baby carrots dunked in mild refried bean dip
- Cooked vegetables like frozen carrots and peas



### DINNER

- Confetti pasta (cooked pasta mixed with garbanzo beans, mixed vegetables, and small chunks of cheese)
- Chicken "fried" rice (pieces of chicken sautéed with vegetables and instant brown rice)
- Vegetable soup
- Mini-meatballs with shell pasta and tomato sauce

### SNACKS

- Half a small tortilla spread with hummus and rolled up
- Mini-smoothie made by blending frozen banana with milk or yogurt
- Mini-bran muffin
- Vanilla steamer (warm milk with a bit of vanilla extract and a teaspoon of sugar)
- Piece of deli meat and cheese rolled up
- Whole-grain pretzels dunked in apple butter



## A FEW WORDS ABOUT FEEDING SAFETY

- To prevent burns and scalds, always keep the handles of pots and pans toward the back of the stove and out of reach of curious little hands.
- While shopping, keep raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods as separate from each other as possible in the cart.
- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly and defrost foods properly in the refrigerator rather than on the counter.

## WHAT COUNTS AS ONE SERVING?

### GRAIN GROUP

- 1/2 slice bread
- 1/4 cup cooked rice or pasta
- 1/4 cup cooked cereal
- 1/4 cup ready-to-eat cereal

### VEGETABLE GROUP

- 1/4 cup chopped raw or cooked vegetables

### FRUIT GROUP

- 1/2 to 1 small piece fruit or melon wedge
- 4 to 6 ounces 100% juice (*limit to once daily*)
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup chopped or canned fruit
- 2 tablespoons dried fruit

### MILK GROUP

- 1/2 cup whole milk\*
  - 1/2 cup yogurt
  - 1/2 ounce cheese
- \*switch to lowfat or skim after age 2

### MEAT GROUP

- 1 ounce cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
- 1/8 to 1/4 cup cooked dry beans
- 1/2 egg

### FATS AND SWEETS

- Limit these



## HELPFUL HINTS

- Set up a snack area with a child-size table and chairs to encourage sitting while eating.
- Talk to your child a lot. Young children love to repeat names of foods, toys, and things around the house.
- Use simple, one-step directions like "Bring me the ball," or "Pick up your spoon." They're easier for your child to understand and follow.
- Before you worry too much about how your toddler is eating, think about all the places where he eats in a typical day – home, child care, homes of grandparents or friends. He may be eating better than you think. His doctor will tell you if he's growing too slowly or too quickly.
- Compliment your child on what a good job he is doing, rather than focusing on how much he eats. Positive reinforcement builds better eating habits and table behavior. We're all so quick to criticize bad habits rather than notice good ones.

## YOUR TODDLER CONTINUES TO GROW AND DEVELOP AT AN AMAZING PACE. SHE HAS BOUNDLESS ENERGY AND MAY BE STARTING TO RUN – BE READY FOR FALLS, BUMPS, AND BRUISES!

She loves to pull and push toys, fill up containers and dump them out, and pound things. She can walk for longer periods of time, especially with a hand to hold.

- Continue to make sure your child gets at least one hour of active playtime each day. For example, take a walk, attend a toddler music and dance class, or visit a local playground. Also include time for playing with toys and friends.
- Play imagination games, like pretending you are farm animals or pets. This stimulates your toddler's creativity and sense of humor.
- Select simple puzzles and other toys that challenge your toddler's fine motor coordination, like pinching and grasping, and space awareness, but be sure they are not too difficult.
- Play with soft balls in various sizes and colors. Toddlers love to throw balls to you!
- Regularly visit a local park that has a safe, toddler-size play area.
- Put together a small playgroup with other toddlers the same age. Be willing to supervise and guide the children – sharing and taking turns does not come naturally for them.



- Be active indoors and outdoors. Put on music and clap, jump, and dance. Create a fun, safe obstacle course. Go on a treasure hunt. Ask your toddler to find common objects like leaves, balls, and flowers. Be sure to include objects that challenge your baby to go under, over, around, and through spaces.
- Encourage your toddler to do simple tasks with you, like putting away toys or picking flowers.
- Continue to avoid television and screen time.



## POSITIVE PARENTING ATTITUDE PAYS OFF!

Raising an 18-month-old is hard work! You're on the run non-stop, playing, chasing, and keeping one step ahead of him. You can't take your eyes off him for a moment. And reasoning with an 18-month-old suddenly becomes difficult when "no" becomes his favorite word. By the end of the day, you're exhausted and have run out of patience. Yet raising a toddler requires just that – a lot of patience and effort.

- Treat your child with kindness and respect; this will encourage similar behavior from him.
- Build in time-outs for yourself – ways to take a break when you're ready to lose your cool.
- Set clearly defined limits like "We don't scream when we want something." Explain in simple words what he should do instead. Then ignore the behavior. It will eventually stop.
- Be firm and consistent about enforcing and following through with limits and rules. This helps your child make sense of the world, feel secure, and know what to expect.
- Pay attention to your child and notice all the positive behaviors. Often a child who misbehaves may be looking for any form of attention, even negative attention, so praising positive behavior gives him the attention he needs and encourages the behaviors you want to see.



Always talk with your baby's doctor when you have questions about your baby's growth, development, and overall health. Ask which situations should prompt an immediate phone call, a visit to the office, or a trip to the emergency room.

The Dannon Institute is a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting research, education, and communication about the link between nutrition and good health. "Growing Leaps and Bounds™" was created to help build a solid foundation of healthy eating and activity for your child, now and for the future. The Dannon Institute is supported by The Dannon Company, Inc.

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