



chat Healthy conversations
from pregnancy to preschool

Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers

Good habits for health, growth and development



Practical advice for healthy eating habits
from pregnancy to preschool



Overall aims

The aim of the Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers is to help all who care for young children to instil healthier attitudes for lifelong health, one small step at a time.

The programme supports every-day decisions about nutrition and activity with practical tips on

- which foods to offer
- which behaviours to encourage
- and how best to manage mealtimes

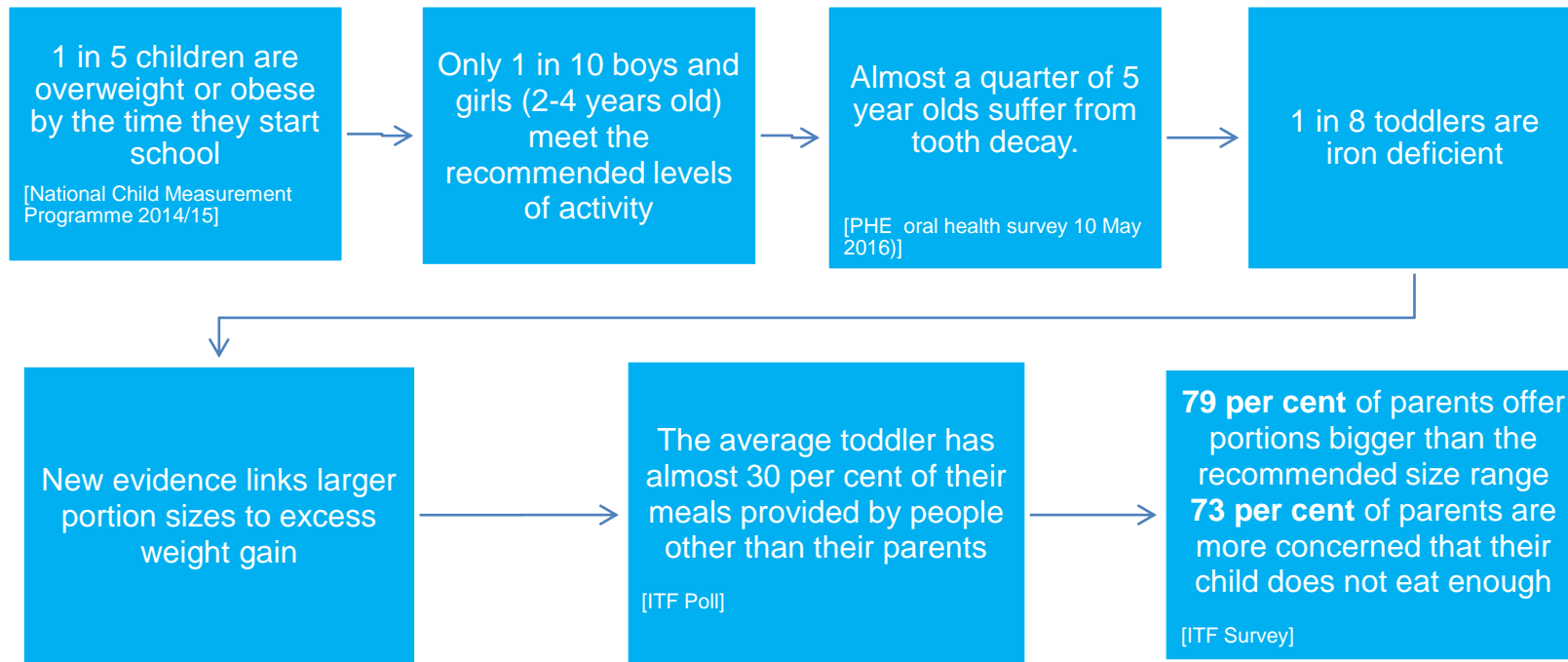
It is supported by other useful resources including

- guidance on toddler portion sizes
- Tot It Up - a food calculator - to help assess and monitor toddlers' nutritional intake, to identify where and how small improvements can be made





The facts





Watch Judy More, Member of the Infant & Toddler Forum, explain further



<https://youtu.be/t-H2N7UsrhA>



Practical advice for healthy eating habits
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The way forward

Consistent, simple and sound advice that can be applied everywhere toddlers are fed

- What we eat and how we are fed affects our growth in early life, which in turn affects our adult health
- Health and childcare professionals have a role to play in bringing about positive improvements in young children's diets
- In order to embrace this role they need to have clear and practical guidance on exactly how they can do this, what foods to offer and what behaviours to instil
- The Ten Steps provides this guidance. This slide deck contains all of the steps, with supporting information
- Study this resource before testing yourself with our [quiz](#)





Eat together as a family and make mealtimes relaxed, happy occasions

Make food easy to eat – finger foods are good. Eat the foods that you would like your toddler to eat. Praise your toddler when he or she eats well or tries something new – toddlers take time to learn to like new foods.

- Eating together as a family is an important social time in family life as well as a learning opportunity for toddlers
- Toddlers learn to eat different foods and improve their self-feeding skills by watching what, and how, other members in the family or social group eat
- Refusing to eat new or unfamiliar foods is a normal developmental stage that is particularly evident in some toddlers
- When eating in social groups toddlers learn that foods they may be reluctant to eat are eaten and enjoyed by other people
- In time, with praise and encouragement, they will gradually begin to taste and learn to like the tastes and textures of a wider variety of nutritious foods



You decide which nutritious foods to offer but let your toddler decide how much to eat

Never insist your toddler eats everything on his or her plate.

- Toddlers' appetites vary, they may eat well at some meals but much less at others
- If parents always offer nutritious foods at meals and snacks, when toddlers do eat well they will be getting lots of nutrients
- Parents often overestimate the quantity of food their toddler needs and some coerce their toddler to eat more when they may no longer be hungry
- Parents often need support to allow their toddler to eat the amount the toddler's appetite demands rather than how much the parent would like them to eat
- Toddlers who eat more than they need will become overweight





Watch Judy More explain the step further



<https://youtu.be/-FnrpMATDLg>



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Offer foods from all five food groups each day

Together they give the right mix of nutrients your toddler needs.

- Each of the five food groups listed supplies a different combination of nutrients
- Eating from all five food groups provides toddlers with a balanced nutritious and enjoyable diet
- The five food groups are:
 1. bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods
 2. fruit and vegetables
 3. milk, cheese and yogurt
 4. meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses
 5. oils, butter and fat spreads
- Sugary foods should be eaten in smaller and limited quantities as these foods provide energy, but fewer nutrients
- Inclusion of small quantities of fat and sugar usually improves flavour making meals more pleasurable occasions



A balanced diet for toddlers combining the five food groups

Tbs = tablespoons Tsp = teaspoons

The Five Food Groups

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

- Offer at each meal and at some snacks
- Choose whole grain often



Fruit and vegetables

- Offer at each meal and at some snacks



One toddler-size portion is about:

- **½-1 slice** whole grain or white bread or **¼-¾** bread roll
 - **3-6 heaped Tbs** whole grain or fortified breakfast cereal without a sugarcoating. No need to add extra sugar – sweeten naturally with dried or fresh fruit
 - **5-8 Tbs** of hot cereal like porridge made up with milk
 - **2-5 Tbs** of rice or pasta
 - **½ - 1½ egg sized** potatoes or **1-4 Tbs** of mashed potato
 - **½-2** crispbreads or **1-3** crackers
-
- **¼ - ½ medium** apple, orange, **¼ - ¾** pear or **¼ - 1 medium** banana
 - **3-10 small** berries or grapes
 - **2-4 Tbs** raw, freshly cooked, stewed or mashed fruit
 - **1-3 Tbs** raw or cooked vegetables



A balanced diet for toddlers combining the five food groups

The Five Food Groups

One toddler-size portion is about:

Milk, cheese and yogurt

- 3 toddler portions per day
- No bottles of milk



- **3–4 oz (100–120 ml)** whole cows' milk as a drink in a cup
- **1 small pot (125 ml)** yogurt or **2 x 60g** pots of fromage frais
- **2–4 Tbs** grated cheese
- Cheese in a sandwich or on a piece of pizza
- **5–7 Tbs** custard or **4–6 Tbs** milk pudding
- Give whole milk rather than lower fat milks from 12 months of age until at least 2 years of age

Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses

- 2 to 3 toddler portions per day



- **2–4 Tbs** ground, chopped or cubed lean meats, fish or poultry
- **½–1** whole egg
- **2–4 Tbs** whole pulses (beans, lentils, dahl) or **1–2 Tbs** hummus
- **½–1 Tbs** peanut butter or **1–2 Tbs** ground or chopped nuts

Tsp = teaspoons

Tbs = tablespoons



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A balanced diet for toddlers combining the five food groups

Tbs = tablespoons Tsp = teaspoons

The Five Food Groups

Oils, butter and fat spreads

- Include small amounts twice a day
- Choose high omega 3 oils e.g. rapeseed, olive and soya oils



One toddler-size portion is about:

- **1 Tsp** oil
- **1 Tsp** butter or fat spread
- **1-2 Tsp** mayonnaise
- **1 Tbs** cream

Sugary foods and packet snacks

- Toddlers under two years of age have lower energy requirements and should not be offered any sweet puddings, cakes, biscuits, confectionery, chocolate or savoury snacks such as crisps.
- Over two years of age you can offer small amounts of sweet foods and salty snack foods occasionally but these should not be a regular part of a toddler's everyday foods.



Once a day:

- **½-1** digestive biscuit or **1-2** small biscuits or 1 small slice cake or pudding
- **1 Tsp** jam or honey or added sugar

If given, limit to once a week only:

- **4-6** crisps or **2-4** sweets or **1 small** fun-sized chocolate bar or a sweet drink such as squash or fruit juice



Watch Judy More explain the step further



<https://youtu.be/QrEwR27C2eA>



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Have a routine and offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day

Offer 2 courses at each meal and only offer nutritious snacks. Don't allow grazing on food.

- Toddlers need to eat small amounts of food regularly throughout the day to maintain their energy levels
- Toddlers who graze on snack foods without a routine usually eat a less nutritious diet and are more likely to suffer dental caries
- A routine of 3 meals and 2–3 planned nutritious snacks ensures a more balanced diet and limits the number of times that teeth are exposed to sugar and acid in food and drinks
- Toddlers can become bored with the first savoury course at a meal but still be interested in eating a second course of different foods. By offering 2 courses of different foods at meals, toddlers will be eating a wider variety of nutrients



Offer 6-8 drinks a day

Give all drinks in a beaker or cup – not bottles. 3-4oz or 100-120ml is about right. Water is a good choice.

- Fresh drinking water should be available to toddlers at all times
- Toddlers need to drink adequate fluids to maintain hydration and prevent constipation
- They should be offered a drink with each meal and snack. They may need more drinks in hot weather or when they are particularly active





- Bottles should be discontinued by about 12 months of age as:
 - Sucking can make teeth more vulnerable to caries
 - Large drinks of milk from bottles or beakers can help cause iron deficiency as large volumes of milk will reduce their appetite for other foods that are higher in iron
 - Iron deficiency affects one in eight toddlers in the UK, causing tiredness, lethargy and delayed development
- Surveys show toddlers drink about 100 –120ml at a time



Encourage parents to give vitamin D every day



Give vitamin D every day

Toddlers don't get enough in their food and need 10 micrograms in a supplement each day.

- Even toddlers eating nutritious diets do not get enough vitamin D
- A supplement of vitamin D for all children from birth is now recommended by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and Public Health England (PHE) recommendations
- The main source of vitamin D is not food and drinks, but the skin, where it is made in response to sunlight when outside, but only April–September in the UK. Toddlers have a high requirement for this vitamin to support their rapid growth and many become deficient, particularly those in the UK who are of Asian, African and Middle Eastern ethnic origin



Watch Judy More explain the step further



<https://youtu.be/OEiKf5F3OkE>



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Respect your toddler's tastes and preferences - don't force feed

Some children eat almost everything while others are much more picky. Some like foods kept separate on the plate and others are happy with foods mixed in together.

- Children have different preferences for tastes, textures and colours. Parents need to respect those preferences
- Toddlers are likely to refuse new foods on sight, without tasting them. Some may even start to refuse foods that they have happily eaten before, because they 'don't look right', however most toddlers grow out of this
- Frustrated parents may be tempted to force feed, however this can make toddlers anxious around food and meals. When anxious, toddlers may lose their appetite and eat less
- Parents need to be adaptable when serving food and not give up when foods are rejected the first time; toddlers are more likely to learn to like foods as they become more familiar with them



Watch Judy More explain the step further



<https://youtu.be/rByFN8OLsvg>



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8

Reward your toddler with your attention – never give food or drink as a reward, treat or for comfort



Play, read or talk with your toddler as a reward. Always give fruit or a nutritious pudding – don't use it as a reward for eating other foods first or for good behaviour.

- Foods given as rewards for eating other foods, or given for good behaviour or comfort, are seen by toddlers as more desirable foods than those not given in these situations.
- When sweet foods or snack foods are given as rewards or comfort, children learn to prefer them. If eaten to excess, sweet and high energy reward or comfort foods can contribute to excessive weight gain
- Parents should be advised not to say 'eat up your vegetables then you can have your pudding' as this makes the pudding more desirable than the vegetables in the toddler's mind – the opposite of a healthy eating message.



- Fruit or a small nutritious pudding should be given whether a toddler has eaten their first course or not
- Toddlers love their parents' attention and parents should reward their toddler with attention and praise instead of food when they are eating well
- Refused food should be removed from toddlers without comment or attention – as hard as this may be. Food can then be offered, as usual, at the next meal or snack time





Limit

- Fried food, crisps, packet snacks, pastries, cakes and biscuits to very small amounts.

... and avoid

- Sugary squash, fizzy drinks, fruit juice, tea and coffee.
- Whole nuts and small, soft round foods which may cause choking.

- Toddlers have a preference for high calorie foods, particularly sweet foods
- These must be limited to small amounts to avoid excess weight gain and a higher risk of dental caries
- By limiting sweet foods to less than four episodes each day, such as three meals and no more than one snack, the risk of dental caries is significantly reduced
- Fruit juice and fruit smoothies are sugary drinks and like other sweet drinks can cause dental caries. If used, fruit juice should always be served well diluted and must be included within the four episodes of sweet food in a day
- Whole nuts and soft round pieces of foods are a choking hazard- toddlers should always be supervised and seated when eating to reduce this risk



Encourage physical activity for at least 3 hours every day and about 12 hours sleep

All activity such as active play inside and outside, walking, running and dancing counts. Limit TV and other screen time like tablets to just 1 hour a day.

- The Department of Health recommends that under-5s are physically active for at least 3 hours every day
- This can be made up of short bursts throughout the day. Playing in the park, walking up stairs, bouncing on a trampoline, dancing, running, walking to nursery and other similar activities all count
- Physical activity aids toddlers' development of the physical co-ordination skills necessary for their future enjoyment of sport and other physical activities when they are older
- Toddlers who sleep less than about 12 hours in a day are more likely to become obese.
- Limiting sedentary behaviours is also important in preventing obesity
- Three year olds who watch more than an hour of TV or DVDs each day on average are more likely to become obese





Quiz

- Now test your understanding of the Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers and take the [quiz](#)!
- Enter your contact details to be sent a certificate if you pass!





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