



Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers

Practitioner Guidance

Feeding the under 3s
the food they need

Good habits for health, growth and development



1. Eat with the children in your key groups and make mealtimes relaxed, happy occasions

Make food easy to eat – finger foods are good.

Set a good example by eating the foods that you would like the children to eat.

Praise children when they eat well or try something new – young children take time to learn to like new foods.



7. Respect children's tastes and preferences – don't force feed

Understand that some children eat almost everything while others are much more picky.

Some like foods kept separate at a meal and others are happy with foods mixed in together.



2. You decide which nutritious foods to offer, taking account of individual dietary needs, but let children decide how much to eat

Never insist that young children eat everything on their plates.



8. Reward young children with your attention – never give food or drink as a reward, treat or for comfort

Play, read or talk with young children 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.



3. Offer foods from all 5 food groups each day

Together they give the right mix of nutrients young children need.



9. Limit...

Fried food, crisps, packet snacks, pastries, cakes and biscuits to very small amounts (if at all).

Sweet foods to four times a day e.g. as part of the three meals and one snack.

... and avoid

Sweetened fruit squashes, fizzy drinks, tea and coffee.

Undiluted fruit juices – only give juice well diluted at meal times.

Whole nuts which may cause choking or be inhaled.



4. Have a routine, offering 3 meals and 2–3 snacks over the whole day

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



5. Children need to be offered 6–8 drinks over a whole day

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

Water is a good choice.

Remember that fresh drinking water should be available at all times.



6. Encourage parents to give vitamins A & D each day

Parents should choose a vitamin supplement suitable for toddlers – most toddlers don't get enough in their food.



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

All activity such as active play inside or outside, walking, running and dancing counts. Encourage parents to limit TV and other screen time like computers to just 1 hour a day.



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