



Toddlers' Eating Habits

Many parents struggle with their toddlers over eating. Parents want to make sure their toddlers are eating the right things in the right amounts. Toddlers' needs change as they grow and develop. Toddlers eat less than they did as babies because they don't need as many calories. Toddlers want to be in charge and are forming their own likes and dislikes.

From day to day, toddlers may not eat the same foods in the same amounts. This is normal. Sometimes they eat a lot, sometimes they don't. Many times, parents' wishes clash with toddler needs and the result is-mealtime battles!

As long as your child is growing normally and not sick or distressed, she is probably getting the food she needs. Experts agree that children can learn to respond to their own hunger signals. However, your child will only be able to do this when she is given the chance. She should not be forced to eat when she is NOT hungry, and SHOULD be given food when she IS hungry.

Children will eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. They are pretty good at getting their bodies what they need. Does this mean you should let your toddler eat whatever she wants? NO!

Parents should still offer healthy foods with a lot of nutrients, and let their toddlers decide which of these foods to eat and how much.

Adapted from Healthy Steps Interactive Multimedia Training and Resource Kit (2000).