

18-24 MONTHS

Your toddler from eighteen to twenty-four months
Supporting your family during your child's second year



**18-24
MONTHS**





YOUR TODDLER AT 18 - 24 MONTHS

Healthy eating and active play are important for your toddler.

This booklet provides information on your toddler's health and tips for parents' health too.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Nutrition

- Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond
- Use a cup instead of a bottle - **STOP** all bottles at this age
- Drinks can include:
 - water
 - full fat cow's milk
 - calcium enriched soy, rice or oat milk - can be used under health professional supervision
- Toddlers need a wide variety of healthy family foods every day



Active play

- **Encourage free movement:** At least 3 hours spent in a variety of active physical play throughout the day
- **Limit inactivity:** Children aged 0 – 5 years should not be inactive for longer than an hour at a time, unless they are sleeping
- **No screen time:** Children under 2 years should have no screen time including no TV, DVDs, using computers, iPads, tablets, smart phones, or any other electronic devices
- **Sleep:** 11 - 14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with regular sleep and awake times



Immunisation

- At 18 months your toddler is due for a number of immunisations as well as their 18 month developmental Personal Health Record (Blue Book) check. If you have not done this yet, make an appointment with your Child and Family Health Nurse or GP

FEEDING YOUR TODDLER

At 18 - 24 months your child will continue to go through developmental changes, physically and emotionally. As they grow their nutritional needs and the foods they choose to eat will also change. It is useful to know what they need to grow up healthy, and to understand their change in feeding behaviour.

MILK FEEDING AT 12 - 24 MONTHS

Mothers decide to continue breastfeeding beyond 12 months for many reasons. Some reasons include cultural or religious practices, following the guidelines or personal desire. How long you decide to breastfeed is up to you and your child. Trust your instinct about this and try not to worry about other people's opinions. Breastfeeding at this age is different for every toddler and mother.

What breastfeeding can look like beyond infancy

- The longer you breastfeed, your child's immune system is boosted
- Breastfeeding can also protect you from osteoporosis and lowers your risk of breast cancer
- Combining healthy family foods with breastfeeding is important for your child's health
- It can give you time to reconnect with your child after a busy day
- Some toddlers may have short frequent feeds all day, others may breastfeed each morning or evening which may fit in with a mothers working schedule
- Toddlers may feed for very short times as they are very busy learning about their environment
- Mothers may feel like they need some personal space from the emotional and physical demands of breastfeeding. If you feel like this, use different activities that your child can play with on their own, so you have some time for yourself
- Some mothers may feel judged or experience negative reactions if they decide to continue breastfeeding. If you experience this seek support from the Australian Breastfeeding Association or a breastfeeding counsellor



FAMILY FOODS

Developing practical eating skills

Most toddlers can manage to feed themselves by the time they are 18 months by either using their hands, a spoon or fork. Although this might be messy, allowing them to feed themselves will help develop their motor skills – which is using their body muscles to develop physically.

At this age, it is up to the parents to provide a variety of healthy foods to the child and for the child to decide to feed themselves depending on their appetite. So, if they haven't started feeding themselves yet, now is the perfect time for them to learn.



Tips to help with self-feeding



- Encourage your child to play with the spoon/fork so they can practise holding it and try to bring it to their mouth



- Yoghurt or porridge are good foods for your toddler to practise dipping their spoon into and bringing it to their mouth. At the start:
 - they are likely to turn the spoon over before reaching their mouth, so expect a bit of mess
 - they may only get a couple of mouthfuls of food, then the parents can feed them the rest



- Choose a fork or spoon made of a soft plastic (BPA free) or silicone
- Use a spoon that is flat and has a big handle so the top of the spoon fits in their mouth and the handle helps them hold onto the spoon

Healthy snacks for toddlers

- Chopped up fruit such as apple, banana or pear
- Hard-boiled egg
- Slice of cheese
- Natural yoghurt with fruit pieces
- Dips (Hummus, guacamole or tzatziki) with vegetable sticks such as cucumber, capsicum, cherry tomatoes or carrot
- Smoothie made from milk or yoghurt and fruit
- Baked beans
- Crumpet/English muffin/rice cake with avocado or nut paste
- Cut up toast or sandwiches with avocado, vegemite or mashed banana
- Home-made muffins or pikelets



Vegetarian and vegan eating practices

Some families follow vegetarian eating practices. Usually this means avoiding animal products such as meat, poultry and fish. Many vegetarians still eat some animal related products such as eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt.

It is especially important that vegetarians eat a variety of legumes, nuts, seeds and grain-based foods to gain the same nutrients that meat, poultry and fish would otherwise provide.

Vegans do not eat any foods that come from an animal. It can be difficult for children who are on a vegan diet to meet their nutritional needs especially iron and vitamin B complex. Plan carefully if your family follows a vegan diet, and consult an Accredited Practising Dietitian to ensure that your child's nutritional requirements are met.

Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian at the Dietitian Association of Australia (DAA): www.daa.asn.au or call the DAA toll free hotline on 1800 812 942



Stopping all bottles and looking after your child's teeth

- If you have not stopped feeding your child with a bottle it is now time to stop
- The longer a child is bottle-fed the higher the incidence of tooth decay, ear infections, possible speech delay and interrupted sleep
- The 12 - 15 months booklet has suggestions on how to support you to stop bottles. If you would like more support make an appointment to speak to a Child and Family Health Nurse or call Tresillian or Karitane
- A dental examination for your toddler is recommended by 2 years of age. This helps your toddler get used to having their teeth checked, and ensures their teeth and gums are healthy
- See www.health.gov.au/dental for information about dental service options

3 easy steps to keep your child's teeth and gums healthy



Put your child to bed without a bottle

Stop offering any bottles at this age



Offer water or milk from a cup

Formula milk, flavoured milk, fruit juice, soft drinks or other sweetened drinks are not recommended as they can cause tooth decay



Help your child brush their teeth morning and night

From 18 months, start using a low fluoride toothpaste



YOUR TODDLER'S PLAY

Screens away for active play

Play is how children learn language skills, social skills, make friends, read body and facial expressions and listen. By turning off screens including TVs, DVDs, computers, iPads, tablets, smart phones or other electronic devices you are enhancing your child's learning and development.

No screen time is recommended for children under 2 years of age. Some parents place a screen in front of their child so they can do work around the house or to settle their toddler. There are many other things that you can use to keep your child entertained with active or quiet play.

Remember: children need to be active for at least 3 hours in a day



Quiet play

- Setting up an activity for your toddler e.g. puzzle, pretend to cook while using plastic bowls, cups and utensils
- Play dough – make animals, food, street scenes, people or monsters – let them use their imagination!
- Setting up some blocks to build with
- Rotate toys to keep it interesting for your toddler. They often like to play with the same toy, but have toys on rotation so that they seem new again
- Visit your local toy library where toys can be loaned out for a time and then returned for different toys to be borrowed

Active play

- Toy musical instruments are great for dancing or they can put on a concert for their teddy bears or dolls
- Setting up an obstacle course with cardboard boxes, pillows, sheets and blankets, cubby houses inside are fun too! You can join in or be in the middle to make it fun. Children love to play with their parents
- Try putting a music CD on and dance
- Organise play dates, go to the park/playground, join a playgroup, check out your local library for Toddler Rhyme Time or Story Time
- Try indoor ball games with rolled up socks instead of balls

Children love to interact and play with their parents. It strengthens the bonds between you. When you praise and laugh with them, it helps them feel good and builds their self-confidence.

Screens away while eating

Eating is a big part of our social life and health. It is important that children and adults try not to eat in front of a screen including the TV or smart phone. This can be a distraction and can prevent you from understanding their hunger and fullness cues.

Toddlers also learn good eating habits from you when you eat together as a family, and are more likely to try new tastes and be less fussy. It is also the best time to talk and socialise together as a family. So switch off or move away any devices during eating times.





YOUR TODDLER'S SLEEP

Transitioning to a 'big bed'

Transitioning to a big bed can be exciting for your toddler. They are gaining more independence. Toddlers are ready to move into a big bed if:

- They have started to climb out of their cot
- They are toilet training at night
- A new baby is coming

Tips to help with the transition

- Move to a mattress on the floor, a low single bed or a cot with a removable side
- Use side rails on a single bed
- Make sure your toddler can get in and out easily and safely on their own
- Let your child help set up their big bed

See the Kidsafe Home Safety Checklist for a safety check of their bedroom. This helps ensure the room is safe for your toddler to explore in, especially as they will now be able to get out of bed and walk around the room and house.

Developing a bedtime routine

It is important for your toddler to have some wind down time before bed. Forming a routine and sticking to the same bed time can help your toddler relax and feel secure. It can take about 20 minutes for them to wind down.

A simple bedtime routine may include:

- having a bath after dinner
- having a clean nappy before getting into bed
- having a quiet play or listening to calming, gentle music or songs
- telling a story or reading a book
- giving a cuddle and a goodnight kiss



CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Managing toddler behaviour and tantrums

Toddlers want to try everything. They want to be independent and discover how the world works. During this time, they are also trying to understand who they are and what they want so you might experience a fast change in their behaviour and emotions every day. This is all normal and they will need a lot of support and understanding as they learn new skills.

Behaviours you can expect from your child at this age

- They can have rapid changes in mood and can become frustrated and overwhelmed easily, especially when they are tired, hungry or unwell, which can lead to tantrums
- They can be enjoying what they are doing so much and be too busy or fussy to:
 - o sit down for meal or snack time
 - o be interested in their food
 - o brush their teeth
 - o go to bed
- They may start to say 'NO' and realise that what they do and say can have an impact on their world

Practising some of the Healthy Beginnings advice on healthy eating, bed time routine or brushing their teeth regularly can be tricky if you're experiencing some of these behaviours with your child.

Tips to help with managing your toddler's behaviour

- Learn about how they react to different things and find ways to help them keep calm
- Establish a routine with your toddler and be consistent. This will help your toddler learn about what to expect
- Have dinner early, between 4 - 6pm, children are much more likely to eat well when they aren't tired
- If your toddler doesn't eat the healthy food you have offered, try to remain calm and positive. Try not to offer less healthy foods. You can offer the healthy food again at the next meal or snack time
- Give your toddler warnings when changing from one activity to another. "It's almost time to pack up your toys for dinner"
- Empathise with your toddler when you know you are asking them to do something that is hard for them. This will make them feel that you understand their feelings. For example "I know you are enjoying playing with your blocks, it looks like such fun, but it's time for dinner". Help your toddler pack up



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Life with a toddler is very busy. You may be trying to do many things at once to get everything done. Research shows that by doing this we are more likely to be forgetful, make mistakes and take longer to get tasks done.

Slow down. Try and limit the number of things you juggle to two tasks at a time. Try focusing on just one task for 20 minutes before switching to the next task.

Managing your screen time

It is recommended that children until at least 2 years of age have no screen time, but sometimes we don't realise that we spend too much time on our screens. Children copy adults so be aware of what you are doing, and how long and often you spend checking your phone or other devices. It is important to model healthy screen use to your toddler by using technology in a balanced and positive way.

Tips to go on a digital detox

- Take a break from checking social media or text messages and show your child other ways to relax and entertain yourself
- Set aside some phone free time, be in the moment and have some one-on-one time with your toddler. This will help you feel more connected and less stressed no matter what is going on in your life
- Allow yourself to slow down, relax and enjoy simple things like the sun on your face, the breeze on your skin, enjoy a cup of tea outside or do some meditation
- Put on some favourite music and have a dance

Keeping up with your physical activity

It can be hard to fit exercise into your day as a parent. Doing some exercise is better than doing none at all. Even a little bit of activity will boost your energy and wellbeing.

Ideas for fitting exercise into your day

- Workout with a YouTube video or exercise DVD at home
- Going for a walk with the whole family or just with your child, playing with them at the park, kicking a ball, playing chasing games running with them as they ride their bike
- Dancing with your toddler around the house can be fun for both of you
- Instead of sitting while talking on the phone - walk instead
- Clean the house or work in the garden with your toddler
- If you are at work try taking the stairs instead of the lift, going for a walk in the sunshine during your lunch break, deliver a message in person to your colleague rather than email
- Park further away from work or get off the bus one stop earlier



Keeping up with your healthy eating

Some practical ideas for yourself and the whole family

- Make wraps with leftovers from last night's roast. Add some salad or vegetables to make it even healthier
- Cook some pasta and add some tinned tomatoes, mushrooms and zucchini. Grate some cheese to put on top. Make a quick salad on the side
- Hard boil, poach or scramble some eggs and have with avocado on wholegrain toast and baked beans
- Have the ingredients on hand for a quick stir-fry with meat, chicken or tofu and some vegetables
- Make a curry/casserole/soup or lasagne over the weekend when you have more time – it can be put in the fridge or frozen and used on a busy night
- Use some chicken pieces in a dish with some vegetables (try capsicum, sweet potato, garlic and red onion), the juice from an orange and some balsamic vinegar and olive oil
- Grill/bake/poach a piece of salmon and serve with pasta and lots of broccoli
- Toss a can of tuna with some pasta and serve with salad or steamed vegetables
- Add pine nuts/cashews and other nuts to your stir-fry or salad – or eat them as a healthy snack
- Keep some tinned chickpeas, lentils, tomatoes, brown rice, wholemeal pasta and couscous in your cupboard and frozen vegetables in your freezer – you will always have something healthy to cook when needed

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR TODDLER'S HEALTH AT 12 - 24 MONTHS



Keep me healthy, give me fruit and vegetables every day



Water in a cup is best for me and my teeth



Keep me active, I don't need screen time for play



I'm a toddler now, not a baby, I can sleep at night without any milk



Reward me with cuddles and praise, food rewards are unhelpful for me





CONTACT



Healthy Beginnings
www.healthybeginnings.net.au



Health Direct Australia
www.healthdirect.org.au

Acknowledgements: The Healthy Beginnings program was funded by the NSW Health Translational Research Grant Scheme 2016 (ID number: TRGS 200) and NHMRC Partnership Project 2019 (#APP1169823). We sincerely thank participating partners of the project from the Sydney, South Eastern Sydney, South Western Sydney and Southern NSW Local Health Districts, and members of the advisory committee and project management team. This resource was part of the Healthy Beginnings program developed by SLHD Population Health and Community Health Services. The information for this resource was obtained from NSW Health sources, National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Breastfeeding Association and Raising Children Network. The information in this resource is for general guidance only and should not be a substitute for professional advice



UPDATED APRIL 2021