

# 2-3 YEARS

## Booklet 1

Supporting your family during your toddler's third year



2-3 YEARS  
BOOKLET  
1





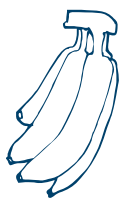
## YOUR TODDLER AT 2 - 3 YEARS

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



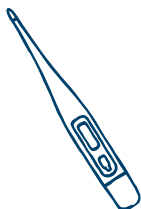
- Keep breastfeeding at 2 years of age and over if you and your child are happy to keep going
- It is best for your toddler to drink from a free-flow cup or an open cup and to stop all bottle feeds
- Drinks can include:
  - water
  - cow's milk
  - soy or calcium enriched rice and oat milk can be used, but it is important to plan this with a health professional
- Toddlers need lots of different healthy foods every day
- They can now eat the foods you and your family enjoy

#### Active play



- **Lots of free movement and play:** Make sure your toddler spends at least 3 hours doing lots of different activities, every day
- **Staying active:** It's good for children to be active. Try to make sure they aren't still for longer than one hour at a time, unless they're sleeping
- **Limited screen time:** At 2 years, children should be limited to less than 1 hour of screen time in a day with an adult watching or playing with them on an educational program or an app. Spending less time on the screen is better
- **Sleep:** 12 - 13 hours of good quality sleep every day. This can include night sleeps and naps

#### Immunisation



- Immunisations at 12 and 18 months are recommended to protect your child from serious diseases. If your child has not yet had these immunisations or their 2 year Personal Health Record (Blue Book) check, make an appointment with your Child and Family Health Nurse (CFHN) or GP as soon as possible
- Your child's next immunisation is at 4 years  
Check [www.nsw.health.gov.au/immunisations](http://www.nsw.health.gov.au/immunisations) for more details
- Other immunisations are available, please discuss with your GP

# FEEDING YOUR TODDLER

From 2 – 3 years your child will continue to go through developmental changes, physically and emotionally. They will start choosing foods to eat and use words to express how they feel about food they like and dislike. They will let you know when they are hungry and stop eating when they are full. It is important that they see you making healthy eating choices.

## Continue breastfeeding

Keep breastfeeding your toddler at this age if you and your child are happy to do so. Breastfeeding continues to have benefits for you both.

If you would like more information to support you with breastfeeding contact your CFHN or visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association website.

<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/weaning-and-introducing-solids/weaning>

## Special situations

You may be pregnant again or have already welcomed a new baby into your family while continuing to breastfeed your toddler (this is called tandem feeding). During this time your body and your toddler's experience with breastfeeding may change. This includes:

- the taste of your breastmilk may change during pregnancy, so your toddler may stop feeding for a while, wean from breastfeeding, or may not mind at all
- during pregnancy, your body will go through hormonal changes. You may get sore nipples and feel unwell during breastfeeding
- once your new baby is born, remember breastfeeding is the only food babies need and should get for the first 6 months. It is important to always feed your newborn first and then feed your toddler. Your body's milk supply will change based on the demand
- some toddlers that have stopped breastfeeding may want to try it again after seeing the baby feeding
- toddlers can react differently when a new baby comes into the family, depending on their personality, some may want to breastfeed a lot and others very little
- during this age, toddlers often get sick or may feel anxious or jealous about their new baby brother or sister, so may want to breastfeed for comfort



# FAMILY FOODS



## What to feed and how much food

At 2 - 3 years your toddler will mainly be eating the same food as the rest of the family. This may include eating 3 healthy meals a day and healthy snacks in between. At this age, toddlers are able to express what they like and dislike, and whether they are hungry or full. That is why it is important that parents provide a variety of healthy food and let children decide how much to eat.

Some children prefer eating fruit over vegetables, usually because fruit is sweeter. It is important to encourage vegetable eating by offering all different coloured vegetables, every day.

Daily dietary guidelines for toddlers 2 – 3 years		
FOOD GROUP	SERVES	SAMPLE SERVE
<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>2½</b>	½ cup cooked vegetables (broccoli, spinach, carrots, pumpkin) 1 cup leafy salad vegetables ½ medium potato, sweet potato or corn ½ cup cooked or canned beans or lentils
<b>Fruit</b>	<b>1</b>	2 small apricots, kiwi fruits or plums 1 medium banana, apple, pear or orange 1 cup diced or canned fruit (no added sugar)
<b>Grains (wholegrain)</b>	<b>4</b>	1 slice of bread ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, quinoa or polenta ½ cup cooked porridge 1 crumpet or English muffin
<b>Meat or alternatives</b>	<b>1</b>	65g cooked lean beef, lamb or veal 80g cooked lean chicken or turkey 100g cooked fish fillet 2 large eggs 170g cooked tofu 1 cup cooked lentils, chickpeas or canned beans 1½ tablespoons nut pastes and spreads
<b>Dairy foods</b>	<b>1½</b>	1 cup (250ml) milk or calcium fortified non-dairy (e.g. soy or rice) 2 slices of cheese ¾ cup yoghurt
<b>Healthy fats</b>	<b>Use in small amounts</b>	1 tablespoon of nut butter ¼ avocado 1-2 teaspoons of olive, canola or rice bran oil



## Offering food to your child's appetite

Your toddler's appetite may be different every day. Some days they will only eat a few bites, and at other times they will eat more than they usually do. It is very important that you do not force your toddler to eat. This is a skill they need to learn so when they are older it does not lead to overeating. Instead, let them lead and take control.

### You can try the following:

- start by eating with your toddler and take away all distractions at meal times such as toys, TV, smart phones or iPad/tablets. This will teach them to focus on eating and they will learn when their body is hungry or full
- if you can, try to eat at the same time each day - toddlers love routine and they will learn what to expect
- offer 3 meals a day and snacks every 2 - 3 hours in between - it is helpful if you eat with your toddler and not just focus on feeding them
- eat at set times instead of eating small snacks all day so they are hungry at main meal times
- at meal and snack times let your toddler decide how much and whether they eat from foods you have offered
- let your toddler feed themselves in their own way - fingers or utensils, fast or slow, a lot or little, 1 or 2 foods
- if your toddler doesn't eat the meal or snack you have prepared, stay calm and relaxed, pack it away and offer the next food at the next meal or snack time
- if your toddler does not like some foods re-offer that food again on another day instead of limiting the menu to only foods they like
- when your toddler stops eating or starts to misbehave, teach them to play quietly while you finish eating



## How do I know when my toddler is hungry?

I am hungry	I am full
If your toddler has the words, they may try to tell you	Distracted from feeding
Getting excited when food is presented	Paying more attention to other things in the environment
Reaching out towards you and looking at you and the food	Eating slows down
Pointing at food	Turning head away
Reaching for food or the spoon	Pushing food away
Whinging or crying, or having a tantrum if no food is offered	Starting to throw the food
Reaching out for your food when you eat	Putting their hand up as if to say 'stop' and closing their mouth



As long as your toddler is well and growing, be confident that they will eat to their hunger which will be what they need to sleep, learn and be active. If you are worried that your toddler doesn't feed themselves, chew food or eat a wide variety of family foods, talk to your GP, CFHN or a dietitian who can support you.



### Developing healthy eating behaviours

Healthy eating behaviours are learned from the beginning of life. This includes eating lots of different foods from the 5 main food groups and by listening to your body to eat when you hungry and stop when you are full.

Sometimes, adults use food to:

- help calm their child and distract them if they are crying or misbehaving
- reward their child if they are behaving well
- show their love to children by giving desserts like chocolate or biscuits
- distract their child with toys, TV, smart phone or iPad/tablet to feed them

If children learn these behaviours from a young age, they are likely to emotionally eat as they grow older and as adults. This can lead to having an unhealthy relationship with food and unhealthy weight gain.





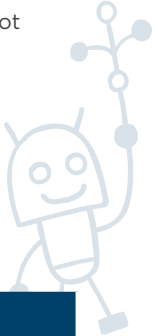
It can be hard for toddlers to communicate with you and tell you what they feel as they are still learning to talk and express their emotions. Instead of offering food to make them feel better or calm, try to understand whether they are hungry, full, sad or tired.

If they are not hungry, give them attention, try to talk to them or comfort them with a hug. If you want to reward them for good behaviour, you can give positive verbal praise (e.g. "you packed away all your toys; that is great"), give them stickers or take them to the park.



### Stopping all bottles and looking after your child's teeth

- By not giving bottles of milk you reduce the chance of ear infections and tooth decay
- Your toddler will feel hungry for healthy foods and get enough calcium by eating food like yoghurt, cheese, broccoli, eggs, almonds
- If your toddler likes milk you can offer small amounts (100mls) in the cup after they have had a meal
- Some parents worry that if their toddler does not have milk in their bottle they will be upset, won't sleep or may wake up at night. These things may or may not happen, but if they do, toddlers will get used to the change
- If you need more help to stop your toddler having the bottle see your CFHN or call Tresillian PH: 1300 272 736 or Karitane PH: 1300 CARING helpline
- 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](http://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

Toddlers are learning about their world when they are playing. Squashing food through their fingers, turning containers upside down, taking dirty clothes out of a basket are all ways of finding out about why and how things work.

Toddlers need a safe environment to explore and play. You may notice that they will do the same activity for longer now and may also play the same game over and over again. At this age they learn about how things work by repeating them.

## What to expect with toddlers play and development

- Children love to get positive feedback on how they are doing with an activity. This will give them confidence to keep practising and try harder
- Playing with your toddler will also build your relationship with them and lets them know that they are loved and important to you. It also helps them develop their talking and physical skills
- A 2 year old may not understand how to share or take turns. They may play next to each other but may not be ready to actually play with each other. Playing together works better at the age of 3 years
- Toddlers can now start to catch and throw, kick large soft balls or bean bags, and push or pull toy prams or trolleys
- They can climb on low play equipment, and as their balance is improving, they will enjoy going down a slide
- Help them be creative with drawing painting with non-toxic paint or crayons on paper, or use chalk to draw outside on concrete – you can help them get started and give them ideas like flowers, a house or a dinosaur!
- Pretend play – using old sheets, clothes pegs, boxes, pillows and chairs to make a cubby house or obstacle course. Dressing-up using scarves, hats, shoes and clothes
- Put music on to get them dancing – dance with them – they will love it! Put on your favourite music, or try children's music or songs that they like to help with their movement skills. They will enjoy the sounds and rhythm while stepping, jumping and moving







## SLEEP

It is important that your toddler has a regular sleep routine. This means going to bed at the same time each night and waking at the same time each morning. Most children at this age need 12 - 13 hours of sleep in 24 hours (including 1 - 3 hours nap during the day). Some toddlers may stop having day naps at this stage.

### **What to expect when your child starts changing their sleeping patterns**

- They may not want to lie down for a sleep when they are in their bed
- Some will not go to sleep at normal bed time if they have had a long sleep during the day. Your child may still need a nap every second or third day as they go through this change
- If your child does not have a daytime nap, you may like to have quiet time with them and read a book, do a puzzle or some drawing and colouring-in. They may even like to have quiet play in their bed

# LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Looking after yourself is easier said than done. If you have an active toddler, or more than one child, are pregnant again, have other family responsibilities or you have gone back to work, parenting pressures can be overwhelming.

Looking after yourself by having some 'Me' time will give you more energy to care for your family, even if you just do this for 10 minutes a day. Take some time out, slow down and do something for yourself – like practising mindfulness, meditation, yoga, listening to music or simply stretching or getting some sun on your face.

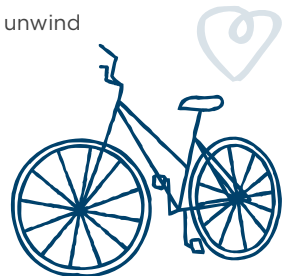


## Sleep routine

Sleep is not just important for your toddler, but for you and the whole family as well. Adults need 8 hours of sleep each night. Managing family, work and household chores can sometimes affect your sleep habits. If you are not getting enough sleep this can make you feel very tired, and affect your mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Tips to help you improve your sleeping habits

- Clear your mind to help you have a good sleep: write down your thoughts, concerns or worries. When you are feeling refreshed you will think clearer
- Have a warm bath or shower at least an hour before bed – this may help you to relax ready for sleep
- About 1 hour before going to bed, switch off all screens including social media, smart phones, TV or internet. The blue light from the screens will stimulate and not relax your mind. Instead, try reading a book
- Try to get some sunshine early in the day – this helps to set your body clock for sleep at night
- Try relaxation exercises or meditation before sleep to help you unwind
- Try to get some exercise every day – as little as 10 minutes a day will help – but don't exercise too close to bed time as this increases your body temperature making it harder for you to fall asleep
- Darken your bedroom, make sure you are comfortable and use earplugs if there is too much noise



- See your GP if you are having any ongoing sleep issues
- Avoid caffeine (tea, coffee, chocolate) before bed
- Avoid alcohol before bed as it interferes with normal sleep patterns
  - National Guidelines for safe alcohol use recommend no more than 2 standard drinks a day. This reduces the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a life time
  - Aim for 2 alcohol-free days per week
  - It is best to avoid alcohol when breastfeeding
  - No alcohol is recommended if you are pregnant again
  - A standard drink contains 10g of pure alcohol. This can be different for each alcohol drink:
    - 150ml of wine is 1.4 standard drinks
    - 285ml of full strength beer is 1.1 standard drinks




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## WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR TODDLER'S HEALTH



Keep me healthy, give me plenty of vegetables and some fruit every day



I will let you know how hungry and full I am every day



Water in an open or a free-flow cup is best for me and my teeth



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



Brush my teeth with a low fluoride toothpaste after breakfast and before bed every day to prevent tooth decay



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



**NEXT BOOKLET  
2 - 3 YEARS**

**BOOKLET  
2**

## CONTACT



**Healthy Beginnings**  
[www.healthybeginnings.net.au](http://www.healthybeginnings.net.au)



**Health Direct Australia**  
[www.healthdirect.org.au](http://www.healthdirect.org.au)

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