

Toddler Feeding Behaviors: What to Expect

Building healthy eating and mealtime habits is important for your toddler. Use this handout to learn more about how to tell if your child is hungry or full and ways to help them eat healthy.

How to know if your toddler is hungry or full:

If they are hungry , they might...	If they are full , they might...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start to cry or fuss• Throw a temper tantrum• Use sounds, words or wave their hands to get your attention• Say “I’m hungry”• Reach for food• Tell you what foods they want through words or hand signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn away or shake their head• Say “no more” or “all done”• Play with or throw their food• Cover their mouth or face with their hands• Cross their arms to show that they don’t want more food• Eat or chew slower• Spit out food

Mealtime with your toddler:

- **Have your meals together.** This will help your child learn how to feed themselves.
- **Eat at the table. Try to stay seated during mealtime.** This will keep your child focused on eating and prevent them from getting distracted.
- **Stay away from watching TV or using screens at mealtime.**
- **Give your child healthy foods for meals and snacks.** Give them choices of healthy snacks.



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What to Expect:	Things to Avoid:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children can sometimes become picky eaters. Give your child many choices of foods even if they won't eat them.• Some days children will eat a lot of food. Other days they will eat very little. This is okay and perfectly healthy.• Between 12 and 18 months: Most children are able to feed themselves using a spoon.• By 24 months: Most children are able to drink from an open cup on their own and feed themselves.• To avoid the mess at mealtime, have your child stay in their seat while they are eating. Use newspaper or towels under your child's chair to help catch the mess.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay away from watching TV at mealtime. Instead, try listening to music during mealtime.• Don't force or hold back food. Your child will eat the amount and at the speed that is best for them.• Mealtime should be over when your child is full. Overfeeding your child doesn't make them stronger or healthier. It can cause your child to become very overweight and other health problems such as diabetes.• Foods like chips, cookies, and sweets should not take the place of healthy foods for your child. These foods should be saved for special events (such as birthdays or holidays).

Healthy snacks for your child: Snacks are meant to hold your child over until their next meal. On days that your child doesn't eat very much, don't feed them unhealthy snacks like chips or cookies to get them to eat something. Stick to healthy meals and snacks and your child will get used to healthy choices. Here are some ideas for healthy snacks:



String cheese



Fruit slices



Whole-wheat English muffin with peanut butter



Low-fat popcorn

Talk to your CHN nutritionist if you have more questions!