



# eating & toddlers



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Tresillian Parent's Help Line  
(02) 9787 0855  
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After the age of 12 to 18 months, there is a definite change in children's eating patterns as their growth slows down and they require less food. It is common for parents to be concerned that their toddlers are not eating enough or seem to be becoming fussy with the type of food they will eat.

#### Toddler eating behaviour:

- Eat less
- Like to eat frequently
- May become fussy with their food.
- Like to handle and explore their food.
- May develop strong likes and dislikes ... and frequently change their minds about what they like and what they don't like!
- Frequently mimic the eating behaviours of their parents.



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### Meal times

Parents need to provide a safe, comfortable environment, food that is nutritious and appropriate to the age and stage of your toddler.

### Remember toddlers enjoy:

- Eating with the family and they will often try to eat from other people's plates
- Eating without interference from others as they will use a spoon as well as their fingers - but be prepared for a bit of a mess and meal times to be time consuming
- Eating small meals or snacks at regular intervals
- Helping with simple food preparation – toddlers will often snack on the food as they help you
- Having things ready straight away – they don't like to wait for anything so BEFORE sitting your toddlers in their high chair have their food ready to eat
- Having food preferences that seem boring to us as adults e.g. will only eat carrots for a week or beans
- Helping to serve their own meal
- Tap water is best to quench thirst
- Milk is an important source of many nutrients, particularly calcium, and should be included in your child's diet. Calcium can also be found in yoghurt, cheese and milk based custards
- Children should have 2 – 3 serves of calcium rich foods each day

### Things to remember

- Aim to make mealtimes enjoyable for the whole family ... not a battleground
- If your family normally eat their evening meal late, your toddler may be tired and will need to eat earlier
- Provide a variety of foods

- Encourage safe eating habits – always get your child to sit down to eat
- Praise your child for eating a range of foods rather than the quantity of food they eat
- Try to model a healthy approach to nutrition by avoiding foods low in nutrition such as chips, biscuits or lollies
- Be realistic about what you expect your toddler to eat.
- Keep food simple for example finger foods such as pieces of fruit or vegetables
- Reduce distractions during mealtime – turn off the television

### Toddlers like attention:

- If behaviour is positive - praise
- If behaviour is disruptive ... use distractions, or remove them from the table and re-offer once again a **short** time later
- Always wash your hands and your toddler's hands prior to handling food

### Reassure Yourself

Reassure yourself with the following thoughts about young children:

- Eat when hungry
- Never starve to death from refusing food

### If Still Concerned

- Keeping a record of what your toddler eats for a week can be helpful. You might find:
  - They eat more food than you thought they did
  - There is a pattern of too much milk or juice that is decreasing their appetite
  - Too many snack foods are being allowed between meals

**REMEMBER EACH CHILD IS AN INDIVIDUAL AND DEVELOPS AT THEIR OWN PACE.**

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\*Always read the label. Use only as directed. If symptoms persist, see a healthcare professional.

### For further assistance:

- Visit either your local child and family health nurse or doctor
- Call Tresillian Parent's Help Line on (02) 9787 0855 or 1800 637 357 (Freecall outside Sydney)
- Contact a Tresillian Nurse on-line at [Tresillian Live Advice](https://www.tresillian.net) by visiting our website at [www.tresillian.net](https://www.tresillian.net)