

# Healthy Eating for Toddlers: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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At age 2 or 3, children begin to prefer certain foods, dislike other foods, and have a lot of variation in how hungry they are for different meals each day.

Don't expect your child to eat the same amount of food at every meal and snack each day. With toddlers, you can usually leave it to them to eat the right amount at each meal, as long as you make only healthy foods available. You decide what, when, and where your child eats. Your child decides how much or even whether to eat.

As you introduce your toddler to new foods, you encourage a love of variety, texture, and taste. This is important, because the more adventurous your child feels about foods, the more balanced and nutritious his or her diet will be.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

## How can you care for your child at home?

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### Encourage healthy choices

- Offer lots of vegetables and fruits every day.
- Buy healthy snacks that your child likes, and keep them within easy reach.
- Be a good role model. Let your child see you eat the healthy foods you want your child to eat. When you eat out, order salad instead of fries for your side dish.
- Encourage your child to drink water when your child is thirsty.
- Find at least one food from each food group that your child likes. Make sure it is available most of the time.

### Make a healthy routine

- Be sure your child eats a healthy breakfast. If you are in a hurry, try cereal with milk and fruit, nonfat or low-fat yogurt, or whole-grain toast.
- Make a regular snack and meal schedule. Most children do well with three meals and two or three snacks a day.
- Eat as a family as often as possible. Keep family meals pleasant and positive.
- Make fast food an occasional event. When you order, do not "supersize."

### Avoid problems with eating

- Be patient when offering a new food. Children may need many tries before they accept a new food.
- Try not to manage your child's eating with comments such as "Clean your plate" or "One more bite." Children can tell when they are full.
- Do not use food as a reward for good behavior.
- Let hunger, not rules or pleading or bargaining, determine what and how much your child eats (within the limits of what you make available).

## When should you call for help?

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Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if your child has any problems.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **V931** in the search box to learn more about "**Healthy Eating for Toddlers: Care Instructions**".

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