



Teaching Healthy Eating Habits to Toddlers

- A toddler's appetite is as inconsistent as their emotions. Today they'll eat anything, tomorrow, it's only square food! While this may well drive you nuts, it's also very normal. What you can do to help stabilise this behaviour is teach your toddler to understand their hunger levels.
- Nutritionists suggest you ask your child if they are hungry before serving a meal or snack so your child begins to make the link between feeling hungry and then eating.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Sydney, points out that children are born with the ability to self-regulate food intake and safeguarding that is one of the big factors in preventing childhood obesity. So don't reprimand a child if they don't have an appetite or else don't finish their meal, but do explain that an unfinished dinner means no dessert.
- If your child leaves their meal and you are worried they haven't eaten enough, put it aside and store appropriately so you can offer it later if your child comes asking for food.
- Don't give in to requests for different food. A toddler might also find it easier to cope with six small meals during the day rather than three bigger ones.
- A key nutrient toddlers need is EPA/DHA, the potent component of omega-3 fatty acids. Found in deep-sea oily fish such as salmon and tuna, these are essential for brain development, especially from birth to age two. And don't assume your child would never eat fish such as salmon.
- Once your child becomes familiar with a new food they may take to it. You can try introducing a new food by adding it to old favourites.
- Iron deficiency is common in children. They require three serves of lean red meat a week to get enough iron, which is essential for red blood cells to carry oxygen to every cell in the body. A lack of iron shows up as lethargy, poor concentration, recurring sickness and pale skin, particularly the undersides of eyes and nailbeds.
- Calcium is the nutrient children need lots of for strong teeth and bones. Kids should be given full-fat dairy until age two. After two the recommendation is for reduced-fat dairy products such as light milk, which is lower in fat but higher in calcium. Other calcium-rich food sources are nuts, seeds, tahini, leafy green vegetables and soft-boned fish such as sardines and anchovies.