

Toddler Nutrition

Choosing a beverage for your child can be difficult with multitude of advertisement claims. Here are good guidelines for your growing toddler, remember to focus on giving calcium rich drinks for growing bones.

- Serve milk with meals and snacks. Children learn by example parents should drink milk too, children are more likely to imitate
- Fortified juices don't provide calcium, choose milk to meet your child's need and milk contains other great nutrients such as Vitamin D
- Offer water in between meals and snacks. Everyone needs water in their diet to meet hydration needs.
- If your child will not drink plain milk, serve flavored milk for better acceptance
- Serve more whole fruit than fruit juices, fruit provides fibers and other nutrients that juice does not provide
- Limit the amount of soft drinks and fruit drinks as these beverages are high in sugar and contain few nutrients

Serving large portions of food, filling up your child's plate will discourage your child from eating well, it is too overwhelming. Serve child size portions, when your child finishes their food they achieve a goal and look to parents for approval. Always give more if your child is hungry and whenever possible allow children to serve themselves. Praise your child often to build good self esteem and create a positive mealtime environment

Children 4 to 5 years old need 3 cups of milk daily. Serving other options from the dairy category will also ensure your child receives the building blocks for growth. Offer 1-2 oz cheese or 1 cup yogurt, ½ cup pudding, sprinkle cheese on hot food and offer ½ cup of frozen yogurt or ice cream to meet these needs

Children snack differently than adults here are some smart snacking ideas:

- Fresh, frozen or canned fruits-bananas, strawberries, cantaloupe, orange, apple-cutting up into little pieces will encourage better acceptance
- Raw vegetables-baby carrots, cucumber slices, broccoli florets, celery sticks-served with 1 oz of ranch dressing is sure to please
- Graham or animal crackers and fig bars
- Soft pretzels
- String cheese or cheese cubes
- Turkey or meat cubes
- Hard-cooked egg
- Granola bar or trail mix

Always serve snacks with a drink to help meet hydration needs