



What you need to know about Feeding your 2½-year-old

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AT YOUR CHILD'S 2½-YEAR VISIT:

- Is it OK to use food to help my child behave better?
- How can I get my child to like drinking water?
- How can I get my child to like a variety of foods?

1 AVOID POWER STRUGGLES AT MEALTIMES.

While your child has grown a lot since your last well-child visit, his emotions and language skills are still catching up, which may be causing more tantrums than ever before.

- Tantrums are a typical part of this age and a normal part of your child's development.
- Mealtime temper tantrums are more likely to occur when your child is hungry or tired.

How to avoid a tantrum:

- Have a meal or snack schedule in place to prevent him from getting too hungry.
- Help him feel in control by allowing him to make choices from options you provide. For example, ask, "Do you want a banana or an orange?" instead of just offering a banana.
- Keep off-limit items out of sight. He is less likely to have a meltdown at the table over your smartphone if he doesn't see it.
- Praise your child when he is behaving well at the table.

How to handle a tantrum:

Children learn how to cope with their emotions by watching adults. Try to be patient when he's having a tantrum.

- Speak calmly, firmly and with love.
- Clearly state what is expected of him. For example, "I know you're upset, but no throwing food."
- Once the tantrum is over, praise him for regaining control of his emotions.

Did you know?



Using food as a reward (like saying, "If you behave in the store, you can have a cookie") teaches your child that tantrums get him what he wants and to use food to cope with his emotions.

2 ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO DRINK THE GOOD STUFF.

Make healthy drinks the main option:

- Water is best for thirst, so offer water to drink between meals.
- Serve plain milk (or water) with meals.
- When dining out, order water or plain milk.
- Be a role model. Your child is more likely to drink healthy beverages if he sees you and other family members doing the same.

Make healthy drinks fun:

- Allow your child to choose his own special cup from which to drink his water or plain milk. He will be happy about what's on the cup (whether it's his favorite color or favorite character), and you'll be happy about what's in it.



3 HELP YOUR CHILD ENJOY A VARIETY OF FOODS.

Providing your child with new foods with different colors, nutrients, tastes and textures helps prevent pickiness and promote lifelong healthy eating. Try giving him new foods with old favorites so that he can enjoy foods he already likes while testing out new ones.

Meals should include a variety of nutritious foods from all food groups, with no added sugars or salt. The same goes for snacks, but in smaller portions.

Veggies	Broccoli, green beans, carrots, tomatoes
Fruits	Bananas, berries, pineapples
Dairy	Plain milk, plain unsweetened yogurt, cheese
Whole grains	Whole-wheat pasta, oatmeal, ready-to-eat whole-grain cereal
Protein	Eggs, beans, chicken, turkey, fish

Kids love to dip



Try serving sliced bananas with nut butter, sliced peppers with hummus or sliced cucumbers with salad dressing.

What to expect next:

- Serve meals in a distraction-free setting and let your child decide what and how much to eat.
- Save yourself the headache of pressuring your child to eat. Toddlers often act out when they feel pressured. If he refuses to eat, make it clear that he will not get any more food (including milk) until the next meal or snack time, and only offer him water in the meantime.
- Avoid all-day snacking. Keep serving meals and snacks at a set time so your child will be ready to eat at meal and snack times and is free to stop eating when he is full.
- Get ready for more growth and development, new words and many new experiences, such as big-kid birthday parties, playdates and preschool. As your child is exposed to more outside influences, the healthy habits you taught at home for the past two and a half years will be more important than ever. Keep up the good work!