



# What you need to know about Feeding your 2-year-old

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AT YOUR CHILD'S 2-YEAR VISIT:

- How can I prevent picky eating?
- Should my child be eating the same foods I serve the rest of my family?
- Should I encourage my child to keep eating if he's only taken a few bites of food?
- Is flavored milk (e.g., chocolate milk) OK for my child to drink?

## 1 PREVENT PICKY EATING.

A little picky eating is normal, but how you feed your child can help keep your "part-time" picky eater from becoming a "full-time" picky eater.

PARENTS' ROLE	BENEFITS
Prepare a variety of nutritious foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your child is learning to like different flavors and textures, and to accept new foods.</li> <li>• Meals will be less stressful; your child can choose what to eat from what you provide, and you know that no matter what he chooses, it is healthy.</li> </ul>
Offer choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps lessen mealtime struggles by letting your child make a choice.</li> <li>• Your child may be more likely to eat a food because it was his choice.</li> </ul>
Serve new foods with favorites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes away the pressure to prepare separate meals or different entrees.</li> <li>• Ensures your child will likely eat something, even if he refuses some foods.</li> </ul>
Let him pick out new veggies and fruits at the store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are more likely to eat something that they picked out and helped prepare.</li> </ul>

### What to look out for:

- **Being a short-order cook.** Making a separate meal for a picky eater teaches your child that he does not have to eat what you prepared first and that he can get his way by whining and complaining.
- **Bribing with food.** Using food to bribe, reward or punish your child teaches him that some foods are better than others.
- **Allowing all-day snacking.** Kids like to snack, but letting your child snack all day means he will not be hungry and ready to eat during mealtime.

## 2 HELP YOUR CHILD MANAGE HIS HUNGER AND FULLNESS.

PARENTS' ROLE	BENEFITS
<b>Follow a meal and snack schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminds you and your child when it's time to eat—especially when your child is so busy playing that he does not display hunger cues.</li><li>• Lets you know if your child is whining because he's hungry or because of something else, such as being tired.</li></ul>
<b>Accept when he's "all done," and avoid the "clean plate club"</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helps prevent a mealtime meltdown. Note: At this age, his growth may slow down briefly, meaning he may not want to eat as much as he used to. This is normal.</li></ul>
<b>Provide distraction-free meals and snacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows your child to focus on enjoying the food and recognizing his hunger and fullness cues.</li></ul>

## 3 STICK TO WATER AND PLAIN MILK, NOT FLAVORED.

Water is the best drink for thirst and between meals. Plain milk (or water) should be served with meals.

### Why only water and plain milk?

- Milk provides important nutrients, such as calcium and vitamin D, for your child's bone health and growth. While flavored milk has these same important nutrients, it also contains unnecessary added sugars.
- Serving your child sugary drinks, such as chocolate or strawberry milk, can cause him to not like healthier beverages, such as water and plain milk. Sugary drinks also cause cavities.

### How much milk?



Your 2-year-old needs no more than 16 ounces of milk per day. If your child wakes up during the night, give him water instead of milk. This will help prevent cavities.

## What to expect next:

- Over the next six months, your child will get better at feeding himself and using a spoon and fork, but it's OK if he still uses his hands.
- Your child will be more opinionated about what he will and won't eat. This is a normal way for him to show independence.
- Your child's growth and appetite will continue to change, so his eating habits may be unpredictable at times. Continue to trust that he knows when he is hungry and when he is full.