



# What you need to know about Feeding your 18-month-old

.....

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AT YOUR CHILD'S 18-MONTH VISIT:

- What should I do if my child will only eat a few foods?
- Is my child drinking too much milk?

### 1 THE FOODS YOUR CHILD LIKES TO EAT WILL CHANGE WITH TIME.

Your child may be able to tell you when he wants “more” or when he’s “all done,” and he may even be using a spoon! He may also be getting pickier about what he will and will not eat.

#### Is your child “a little picky” or a “picky eater”?

- He might refuse to eat a food he enjoyed in the past or all of a sudden want to eat a food he has refused in the past. This is normal.
- He might want to only eat the same few foods each and every day. This is a very common, normal and healthy part of his development, and this finicky phase should pass.
- He might want to eat more at some meals and less at others. This is normal.

**Did you know?**



Toddlers get the nutrition they need over the course of a few meals and snacks, not all at once.

### 2 NO PRESSURE!

Even though it is tempting to pressure your child to eat certain foods, it can lead to power struggles at mealtime and may prevent him from choosing to eat those foods later on.

- As the parent, your role is to provide your child with a variety of healthy foods and drinks, and your child’s job is to decide what and how much to eat from what is provided.
- Allowing your child to decide when he has had enough helps build his confidence as a healthy eater, and it teaches him that he can rely on you to provide for him.
- Let your child see you and other family members enjoying a variety of healthy foods. If you eat the way you want your child to eat, he is more likely to copy your behaviors.

### 3 MAKE THE MOST OF MEALTIME.

Life can get hectic with a toddler, but it is important to continue providing snacks and meals in a calm, distraction-free setting.

#### Benefits of distraction-free meals:

- When your child eats with no distractions, he learns to engage with food and experience the different smells, textures, colors and flavors. This positive interaction will help him to grow up liking a variety of healthy foods.
- Limiting the distractions (by turning off the TV and leaving cell phones, toys and computers out of the dining area) helps ensure your child is paying attention to his eating. This leads to more nourishment and less waste.
- Screen-free snacks and meals promote healthier eating for toddlers and families.

### 4 WATER IS BEST FOR THIRST AND FOR BETWEEN MEALS.

Water is the best drink for a thirsty child, and it also helps prevent constipation. If your child is thirsty between meals, choose water.

#### Why only water between meals?

- Milk is a healthy drink for your child, but too much—especially between meals—can fill up his tummy, causing him to eat less during mealtime. **It is best to limit your child's milk intake to 16 ounces per day.**
- Fruit juice (even 100%) and sugar-sweetened drinks (such as fruit punch, soda, lemonade and powdered drink mixes) can lead to tooth decay and cavities, and can have a negative effect on what and how much your child eats at snack and meal times.

### What to expect next:

- Continue to provide your child a variety of nutritious foods. His tummy is still little, so he will need small meals and snacks that are filled with the nutrients he needs to grow and stay healthy.
- The way you feed your child will continue to be as important as what you feed him. **Let him take the lead on what and how much food he eats from what you provide.**

### The 411 on food rewards



Rewarding your child with food can undo all of the hard work you have done to help him develop into a healthy eater.

#### Using food as a reward:

- Teaches him to eat even if he is not hungry.
- Teaches your child that he deserves a treat for good behavior.

### Did you know?



Kids who eat veggies and fruits—and drink milk and water—eat less junk food and are better nourished.