



What you need to know about Feeding your 3-year-old

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AT YOUR CHILD'S 3-YEAR VISIT:

- How can I get my child to behave during mealtime?
- My child has started to ask for fruit juice. Should I give it to him?
- Is it OK for my child to have sugary drinks when we eat out?

1 YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON WHAT YOUR CHILD EATS.

At 3 years old, your child is even more influenced by the people and things around him, but these influences may not always be positive (such as TV ads for sugary drinks, birthday parties, etc.). The good news is you, as the parent, are still the most important influence over what your child eats.

PARENTS' ROLE	BENEFITS
Provide distraction-free meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distraction-free meals (with no TV, smartphones or toys) allow you to bond with your child and can lead to healthier eating habits.
Give extra attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child may need more of your attention at mealtime, especially if he has been away from you all day at preschool. Giving him that extra bit of attention may keep him from acting out at the dinner table.
Let him choose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having choices can help him feel more independent. For example, he can choose what kind of fruit to have at snack time or what cup to drink his water out of. • Keep letting your child decide what and how much to eat from the nutritious foods you provide.
Be a role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family meals are a great chance to model table manners and nutritious food choices for your child. • Your child is more likely to choose a variety of nutritious foods if he sees you (and other family members) doing the same.

2 MAKE IT CLEAR SNACK AND MEAL TIMES ARE THE TIME TO EAT.

Sometimes children can get so distracted with playtime, or other fun activities, that they ignore their hunger cues. You want your child to know that mealtime is the time to eat.

- If you notice your child is pickier at mealtimes, it could be that he just is not hungry enough. Limit all-day snacking to ensure your child shows up to meals with an appetite. A good rule of thumb for this age is two to three snacks a day.
- If your child refuses to eat at a mealtime and then asks for a snack 10 minutes later, calmly remind him when the next opportunity for a meal or snack is and only offer water in between.
- If mealtime is a distraction-free time, and your child is hungry, he should be ready to eat. If he still refuses, he may not be hungry.
- If your child refuses dinner, even though you made it clear it's the last opportunity to eat until breakfast, going to bed hungry is OK.

3 YOUR CHILD'S APPETITE MAY CHANGE EACH DAY.

It is normal to wonder whether your 3-year-old is eating enough. Your child is still growing, but not as fast as he did during his first year. His appetite will change each day, and that is normal and OK. It is important to provide him with regular meals, including a variety of nutritious foods, packed with the nutrients he needs.

Remember: Your child knows exactly how much food he needs to eat. If he only eats a few bites at lunch, he'll probably eat more at dinner.

4 STICK TO THE ROUTINE WHEN YOU ARE EATING OUT.

Family meals don't always take place at home, but the same healthy habits still apply:

- Order water or plain milk as they are still the best beverages for your child to drink.
- Let your child decide what and how much to eat from the menu by showing him a couple of options. For example, ask him if he would like to try the turkey sandwich or the spaghetti. Be sure to help balance out your child's plate by ordering a side of veggies or fruit.
- Follow the same mealtime rules as you do at home. For example, if your child decides not to eat, calmly let him know that he will not be able to eat again until the next meal or snack time.
- Continue to role-model healthy eating habits as a family.

No juice zone

- Your child still does not need juice. Even 100% fruit juice has as much sugar as soda.
- If your child is already drinking juice, health experts recommend limiting it to a 4-ounce cup a day—which is less than a typical juice box.
- Since most kids are offered juice at school and other places (like parties, playdates, grandparents' house, etc.), it's best that you don't have it at home.

Try this!

If your child likes the fizz in soda, try ordering a plain seltzer with a slice of lemon. He will still get the bubbles without all of the sugar.