



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Healthy Eating Tips for Toddlers with Down Syndrome

Toddlers have small bellies and growing bodies. They also have a budding sense of independence. As a parent, this can be both delightful and exhausting, especially at mealtime! This handout gives helpful tips on healthy eating for your toddler

TIPS FOR EVERY TODDLER

- **Fill your toddler's belly with healthy foods to help him/her grow.** As a parent, your job is to serve the healthy food. Your toddler will decide how much is the right amount.
- **Eat meals and snacks around the same time every day.** This helps create a routine for your toddler and your family. Toddlers and people with Down syndrome thrive on routine. Setting a healthy routine early is recommended.
- **Offer the family meal at mealtime.** This encourages your toddler to try new foods that are not specially made for him/her.

HEALTHY FOOD TIPS

- **Follow the "3 and 2" rule.** Try to serve 3 meals and 1-2 snacks every day. With each meal, try to offer 3 types of food. With every snack, try to serve 1-2 types of food.
- **Let your child explore new foods, flavors and textures.** Every toddler explores at a different pace. Mealtime is about eating and learning mealtime basics. Remember – getting messy is normal!
- **Serve whole, unprocessed foods as often as you can.** Unprocessed means a food has not been changed much or at all from its original state.

HEALTHY DRINK TIPS

- **Give your toddler water throughout the day.**
- **Do not give your toddler sweet or sugary drinks.** This includes 100% fruit juice, soda, chocolate milk and sports drinks. They have lots of extra sugar, which can cause extra weight gain.
- **Serve food or drinks with calcium 2-3 times a day.** Your toddler needs calcium for strong, healthy bones and teeth. Calcium is in milk, cheese, plain yogurt, and dairy substitutes like almond milk and coconut yogurt.

WHO CAN I CALL WITH QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

- **Your son/daughter's doctor.** He/she can answer questions about feeding and nutrition.
- **A feeding therapist or registered dietitian.** You can schedule an appointment with the Down Syndrome Program by calling 617-643-8912. Or search online for a local registered dietitian at www.eatright.org.

Did you know?

People with Down syndrome need fewer calories than their peers. This is because they have a slower **metabolism**. Because of this, starting your toddler early in life with healthy eating and exercise habits is important to help him/her keep a healthy body weight!

HEALTHY SNACKS AND FOODS

Below are examples of healthy snacks and healthy types of foods that your son/daughter can try.

Remember – The key to having your son/daughter try new foods is to try, try and try again. It can take many, many tries for your child to like a new food, texture or temperature.

Whole, unprocessed foods

- Fruits and vegetables
- Beans
- Nut butter
- Whole grains and starches (oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, barley, potatoes, corn)
- Lean proteins (plain yogurt, eggs, chicken, turkey, pork, fish)



Healthy snacks ideas

- Sliced veggies and nuts
- Sliced fruit and low-fat cheese
- Yogurt and fruit
- Whole grain crackers with hummus



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Down Syndrome Program

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For more information please call

617-643-8912