



Early Learning Digest

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Feeding and Nutrition: Your Toddler

By age two, your toddler should be eating three healthy meals a day, plus one or two snacks. However, it is important to avoid fixating on amounts which can cause mealtime to become a battle. With his improved language and social skills, he'll become an active participant at mealtimes if given the chance. Sitting as a family at mealtime is the beginning of a good habit, too!

Your child probably uses a spoon, drinks from a cup, and feeds himself finger foods, but he's still learning to chew and swallow efficiently, and may gulp food quickly to get back to playing.

For that reason, the risk of choking is high, so avoid the following foods which can be swallowed whole and block his windpipe:

- Hot dogs (unless sliced lengthwise, then across)
- Whole raw carrots
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter
- Nuts (especially peanuts)
- Raw cherries with pits
- Round, hard candies or gum
- Raw celery
- Whole grapes
- Marshmallows



Ideally, make sure your child eats from the four basic food groups each day:

- Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
- Milk, cheese, and other dairy products
- Fruits and vegetables
- Cereals, potatoes, rice, flour products

Don't be alarmed if your child doesn't always meet this ideal. Many toddlers resist eating certain foods, or will eat only one or two favorite foods for a long period of time. Offer a variety of foods and leave the choices up to them. They'll eventually eat a balanced diet on their own.

Source: "Feeding and Nutrition: Your Two-Year-Old," American Academy of Pediatrics, www.healthychildren.org, November 2015.

Breastfeeding Benefits

Since 2012 the American Academy of Pediatrics has strongly recommended that mothers breastfeed for at least the first year of a child's life, and that in the first six months the baby is nourished exclusively by breast milk.

Breastfeeding is a natural process; however, some women have trouble during the early stages of nursing. The good news is that most problems are resolved with patience, practice or treatment. A lactation consultant can review breastfeeding techniques and help a mom with any problems that make nursing difficult. New mother support groups and encouragement from a partner, family, friends and employer are also important.

Studies have shown a number of important health benefits to breastfeeding. Among them:

Breast-fed children are more resistant to disease and infection early in life than formula-fed children.

During nursing, the mother passes antibodies to the child, which helps the child resist diseases and improves

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or go to www.helpmegrowmn.org



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Cooking With Preschoolers

Cooking is a fun, engaging activity for children and can be an important teaching tool for parents and caregivers. The experience of creating meals allows children to learn and practice math concepts while building language skills. It can help your child's self-confidence while laying the foundation for healthy eating habits.

Cooking with kids may take more prep time and patience, with flexibility your time in the kitchen can be an activity you will both enjoy and remember for years.

How Cooking Helps Preschoolers:

- **Builds basic skills.** By counting eggs or measuring ingredients in a measuring cup you can help your child learn and develop basic math skills. Count together as you spoon dough onto a cookie sheet. As you read the recipe together you are introducing new words to your child.
- **Encourages an adventurous palate.** Preschoolers can be picky eaters, and cooking with them may get them to open up to new tastes. By allowing opportunities to sample dishes and taste new ingredients, your child might be more open to trying new things than if you served them at a meal.
- **Helps young kids explore with their senses.** Invite kids to listen to sounds of the mixer, mix and roll dough and watch it rise, smell it baking in the oven, and finally taste the warm bread fresh from the oven. If they have been involved in the cooking process, it



smells good, looks appealing, they may just be willing to try it!

- **Boost confidence.** Working in the kitchen provides opportunities for preschoolers to show what they can do and provides a sense of accomplishment. Talk about how they helped you prepare the meal. You could name the dish after your child and say you are serving "Will's Pizza" or "Ella's Salad" for dinner tonight.

A few tasks in the kitchen are particularly well-suited for kids ages 3 to 5. Look for cooking related activities that your child can complete with minimal involvement such as pouring liquid into a bowl, adding ingredients, stirring pancake batter, tearing lettuce for salad or assembling a pizza.

Start small and plan projects that take 5 – 10 minutes. For safety reasons, you need to be in the kitchen supervising and monitoring progress at all times. Spending time in the kitchen with your kids can foster an interest in food and cooking that will last for life!

Source: "Cooking With Preschoolers" retrieved from Kids Health at <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/cooking-preschool.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=p-ptr>.

Breastfeeding Benefits

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the normal immune response to certain vaccines. Breastfeeding has also been shown to reduce the likelihood of ear infections.

Breast-fed children are less likely to contract a number of diseases later in life, including juvenile diabetes, multiple sclerosis, heart disease, and cancer before the age of 15. Significant evidence suggests that breast-fed children develop fewer psychological, behavioral and learning problems as they grow older.

Breastfeeding helps a woman to lose weight after birth. Mothers burn many calories during lactation as their bodies produce milk. Mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop osteoporosis later in life. Mothers who breastfeed also have a lower risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer. Women who lactate for a total of two years or more reduce their chances of developing breast cancer by 24 percent.

Despite the clear benefits of breastfeeding, there are circumstances when breastfeeding is not in the best interest of the baby. Parents need to discuss individual situations with the baby's health care professional in order to feel assured that their baby will do fine without being breastfed. It will also help them find the best alternative formula for their baby.

Sources: "Benefits of Breastfeeding," *Natural Resources Defense Council*, <http://www.nrdc.org/breastmilk/benefits.asp>, and www.healthywomen.org.