



Parents decide: **What food is served**
When food is served

Children decide: **Whether or not to eat**
How much to eat

15 Months Old

At this age, most children are very observant. They watch everything you do, and often try to imitate. This carries over into what they'll want to eat, too. Your child is much more likely to want to eat what you're having than anything you've prepared specially for him. If you eat fast food, he'll want to try it too and he will probably find it pretty tasty! At the same time, his appetite is likely to be getting smaller and so he just may not be very hungry at some meals.

Avoid the "picky eater" trap

Some parents worry that their child is not eating enough, and will decide that eating something (like French fries) is better than nothing. This is how many children begin refusing "good food" and eating lots of "junk food".

They didn't start out "picky", the adults around them helped create it. Don't fall into the "picky eater" trap: offer variety, once the serving of the favorite is gone, the child can choose the other foods served or have nothing. Either is okay.

If your child doesn't want to eat what you provide, he is probably not very hungry. Let him learn to listen to his appetite. Maintain your usual feeding routine and he'll know another meal will come later. Don't coax him to eat. Never try to force him to eat.

A smaller appetite often means that meals aren't eaten when they are presented. Snacks must be nutritious to make up for missed meals. But, don't worry if your child isn't interested in snacks either.

Portion Sizes

Young children need less food than you may think. A typical toddler needs the amount of protein (meat) in 1/4 (one quarter) of a McDonalds Cheeseburger or 2 Chicken McNuggets in a day! Look at your child's palm: the amount of meat that will fit on his palm is about right for a meal.

A general rule for portion sizes for other foods: one tablespoon of each food for each year of age.

Remember: no two days – and no two toddlers-- are alike. Appetites and needs vary widely from child to child and even in the same child from day to day!



Developing good habits:

Do not use food as a reward or bribe. Give your child your time and attention instead: read a story or give an extra hug to reward a behavior you like.

Milk:

Sometimes a busy toddler at this age would rather drink than eat. Especially if you still give a bottle, your child may find he can get all the calories he needs without having to stop to eat. Some children can consume large quantities of milk this way. Sometimes parents will feel that this is okay "he won't eat, but at least he is drinking his milk". Your child only needs about 16 ounces of milk daily. If he is getting more than that (or if you don't know how much he is drinking because several people provide his milk) try this tip: fill a 16 ounce (2 cup) container with milk each morning and only pour his milk from that container. When it is empty, your child can learn that his milk for the day is all finished.

Juice:

A child who is given juice can also lose his appetite for anything else. If your child is consuming more than 4 ounces of juice daily, the easiest way to stop that is not to have any available at home. When he asks for juice, you can take him to the refrigerator and show him that you don't have any.

Car snacks:

You should avoid getting into the habit of providing snacks in the car. Although the ride home may be long and boring, your child does not have to eat during the ride. Several concerns: most important, if your child chokes while you are on the road, you may have great difficulty pulling over safely to help him. Also, snacking to relieve boredom creates an approach towards food that may plague your child and lead to a long struggle with overweight and obesity. Have only water available to drink and use other distraction techniques such as singing or listening to kids' music to pass the time in traffic. If you know your child is truly hungry, it would be a good idea to feed him something nutritious before you get on the road.

Screen time

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under two years old should never watch TV or videos. Most parents do not follow this recommendation.

If your child will be likely to see TV or watch videos, make sure you choose what he or she will watch, turn it on when it is due to start, and then turn it off again once it is done. This will help you to be more aware of what your child is watching and for how long. Kids who sit in front of TV for long periods have been found to be much more likely to become overweight.

Active play time

It may seem to you that your child of this age never stops moving! Many toddlers are very active. Although this may be tiring for you, it is completely normal. Make sure your child has a safe place to explore while he learns about his world. If he is having a grumpy day, sometimes going outside together to play for a while can give you both a nice break.

Indoors, children at this age often love to dance or move to music. They also can be kept busy stacking items like small cans of food, or re-arranging your pots and pans!