Caregiver Tips

• Eat together as a family. Your toddler will watch what you eat. Offer a colorful variety of foods, especially vegetables, fruits and whole grains.

• Trust your toddler’s appetite. A parent or caregiver’s job is to provide a healthy meal. A toddler’s job is to decide how much of the meal to eat. This will prevent mealtime arguments.

• Provide 1-2 healthy snacks per day. Have water available at all times.

Feeding Advice

• Each meal should include vegetables, fruit, whole grains and a healthy protein.

• Repeatedly offer a variety of textures, flavors, and colors at each meal. This will limit picky eating.

• Encourage toddlers to feed themselves.

• Use small plates, spoons and forks.

• If your toddler does not eat the meal offered, resist giving snacks or a preferred food afterward.

• Have family meals every day.

• If your child is in child care or with relatives, make sure you know what they are eating and drinking. Maintain healthy eating plans.

What should my toddler be drinking?

• Serve milk with meals.

• Serve water first for thirst between meals.

• Sugary drinks, including juice, are not recommended for toddlers.

Activity Advice

• Encourage one hour or more of daily play – marching, climbing, jumping, dancing and going outside.

• Join in the fun with your toddler and play along.

• Limit screen time (TV, computers, tablets, video games, cell phones) to 30 minutes at a time and no more than 1 to 2 hours per day.

• Keep computers and TVs out of toddler’s bedroom.

Sleep Advice

• Enjoy a calming sleep routine with low lights, a warm bath, and reading together.

• No food or screens before bed.

• Toddlers should get at least 12-14 hours of sleep each day. They also nap at least once a day.

Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App

Search Parenting at Meal and Playtime on Apple Store or Google Play

App Highlights...

- Physician-endorsed materials for parents to access on-demand
- Resources for parents organized by age
- Text reminders sent monthly and/or for age milestones
- Easy sign-up
- Videos on feeding, play, nutrition and more

http://ohioaap.org/projects/PMP
Your Toddler is Changing

- They want to do things for themselves now.
- Toddlers do not sit still. They get up, dance around, play and eat during mealtime.
- Mealtime will be messy! Your toddler is learning how to use a spoon, fork and cup.
- Over the next year, your child’s language will continue to develop. Ask them what they see, hear, smell, taste and touch.
- Toddlers often ask for the same foods, games, TV programs or songs over and over.
- Chores are fun for toddlers. Allow them to help with wiping, sweeping, laundry and dishes. Play music and sing together.

Fun at Mealtime

- Kids love to help with food. If they make it, they will try it.
- Offer veggies or fruit with dips, like salsa, hummus, yogurt or ranch dressing.
- Flavors or spices can add something new. Add a drizzle of maple syrup or cinnamon onto carrots, green beans or a sweet potato.
- Change how a food looks on the plate. Shred carrots or use a cookie cutter for shapes.
- Try pairing favorite foods with unfamiliar foods.

Try This!

- Try not to get into a struggle with your child about food.
- Avoid bribing. Don’t use food as a reward. They love the reward but don’t learn to like the food you want them to eat.
- Plan ahead. Pack your own healthy snacks that won’t spoil, like unsweetened cereal, whole grain crackers, dried fruit or fruit you can peel (oranges, bananas).

Play with a Purpose

Every day, set aside some time to play with your child:

- Talk – Use words to describe everything your child is doing. Talk to them as they do things themselves, even if it’s wrong (shoes on wrong feet, pants on backward). Be excited, celebrate their effort.
- Big muscles (legs, back, arms) – Play games that make their heart beat fast as they run, jump, throw, catch and kick with their feet. Chase, tag, hide-and-seek, races, and climbing on things build strength and confidence. Make time every day to throw, roll, bounce, and kick a very soft ball.
- Hands and fingers – Do things that make them use their hands, like coloring, painting, puzzles, or building with large Lego toys.

What Comes Next?

- Preschoolers may start to look taller or thinner because they have less body fat after age 3. This is normal.
- Your preschooler may ask for things they see on TV (toys, foods, drinks). Keep screen time to a minimum.
- Praise your child often when they are following directions.

Play with a Purpose: 2 years