

Healthy Eating for Your Two-Year Old

You are now the parent of a toddler. Running, jumping and doing whatever they want, two-year olds present an interesting dilemma when it comes to providing healthy nutrition all of the time. Your child's nutritional needs are now clumped with those of children ages 2-6 years. While older kids will need more calories to keep them moving, 2-year olds require most of the same nutrients as their older friends and siblings.



The Basics:

At two years of age your child can:

- Enjoy serving sizes that are 2/3 of a regular serving size according to the food guide pyramid. Visit www.usda.gov/cnpp-KidsPyra-PyrBook.pdf.
- Change from cow's whole milk, soy milk, or rice milk to lower fat milks including skim. Children will continue to receive the fats they need from other sources in the diet. They no longer need all of the fat and calories associated with whole milk after the age of two.
- Continue to vary their intake from day to day. Children adjust their intake according to their activity level and growth patterns. As long as your child appears energetic, well hydrated, and continues to grow, avoid making an "issue" of their daily intake.
- Be encouraged to try new foods. Researchers agree that the more of an issue a parent or caregiver makes regarding a child's intake, the more of a battle it will become. Rest assured that ALL children will have food jags, when they will only eat one, two or three items for several days, weeks or months. Allow your child to experiment with new food as they feel comfortable. Continue to offer a variety of options and teach by example when you eat a healthy balanced diet.



Getting Started:

- Allow your 2-year old to help with food preparation in the kitchen. They will enjoy washing vegetables or fruit in a collander, stirring ingredients, and washing pots and bowls in the sink.
- Encourage food safety at a very young age. Teach your child to wash hands before food preparation and meal time. Proper hand washing is the easiest and most effective way to promote food safety.
- Provide adequate protein for growth
 - Your two year old needs about 1 ounce of protein for every 10 pounds of body weight. This is 3 ounces of protein for your 30 pound child. 3 ounces of protein looks like a deck of cards.
- Encourage a diet high in fiber (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans) to help with constipation which is common in toddlers.
 - Your two year old needs about 7 grams of fiber per day.
- Encourage daily activity and exercise. It is never too young to teach your children about the importance of moving their bodies.

