



Tips on how to improve your toddler's intake of fruit and vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables should be included in every meal.
- For a vegetable that has been refused in the past, try to prepare it in a different way. Don't just boil vegetables, toddlers can show more interest in the flavour of vegetables when stir-fried, roasted or baked. Stir frying a vegetable with a little onion and garlic can make all the difference for an iron-rich green leafy vegetable like spinach.
- Pack casseroles and homemade meat based dishes with loads of mixed vegetables. Fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables can be used in recipes. Variety and colour is the key to getting the balance right.
- Until your toddler learns to enjoy eating vegetables, grating vegetables into dishes at least ensures that they get some of the nutritional benefits. But they still need to learn to accept them, hidden vegetables are only being eaten because they're disguised.
- For a fruit that has been refused in the past, also try preparing it in a different way. A fruit that is cut into a different shape can seem like something very different to a toddler and he may be more open to trying it.
- Offer a choice of fruit, 'do you want the banana or the melon', rather than just telling him he has to eat the melon. Toddlers often enjoy having control.
- Freezing fruit purees as ice-pops is a good way of adding a fruit portion, helping them get closer to achieving their daily requirement on hot days.
- Don't run short of fruit, buy frozen fruit to have in the freezer and defrost to give as part of a healthy snack. Frozen fruit and vegetables are just as good as fresh.
- Smoothies can be packed with fruity goodness and toddlers love them. Make quick and easy nutrient-rich smoothies by blending yoghurt and fruit, trying different combinations for a variety of tastes.
- Snacks provide an important part of the energy toddlers need and an ideal opportunity to include fruit and vegetables. Healthy snack ideas include raw/steamed vegetable sticks with dips, fresh fruit slices and fruit yoghurts. Click on to the Cow & Gate feeding for life website for healthy meal plan ideas suitable for toddlers.
- Pure unsweetened fruit juice is a great source of vitamin C, but due to the high natural sugar content make sure to dilute the juice 1 part fruit juice to 4 or 5 parts water and give with main meals to prevent tooth decay.
- Take a look at your own diet. Toddlers see parents, siblings and other children as role models; if they see you eating fruit and vegetables, they are more likely to want to try them. Don't expect your toddler to eat lots of different fruit and vegetables if you don't.
- Remember you may have to offer a food more than ten times before your toddler decides that he likes it! Toddler's tastes change overtime, so if at first you don't succeed try and try again!