

Compact Advice

Toddler nutrition – the transition from weaning food to family food

An age-appropriate and varied diet as well as plenty of physical activity are important for the healthy development and well-being of toddlers (1 – 3 years). The transition from a weaning diet to the family's diet takes place towards the end of the first year, depending on the individual development of each child. Toddlers can and should participate in family meals.¹



What is changing?

- Increased food variety
- Less milk, more diverse family meals
- Active food selection by the child

A balanced family diet¹

- **Ample amounts of:** beverages and plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, cereal (products), potatoes, legumes and nuts.



provide folic acid, vitamins B1 and C, potassium, provitamin A, magnesium and fibres

- **Moderate amounts of:** animal products such as milk/dairy products, eggs and meat (products). Fish 1 – 2 times a week.



provide vitamins B1, B2, B6, B12, niacin, biotin, protein, calcium, iodine, iron, zinc, vitamin D, DHA/EPA

- **Sparing amounts of:** sugars, sweets, salt, fats high in saturated fatty acids, snack products.

Beverages:

Toddlers should drink approx. 820 ml of fluid² per day, preferably water. Sugary drinks should be avoided as they lead to an increased energy intake, an increased risk of obesity, poor nutrient supply and an increased risk of tooth decay!¹ Offer water from a cup/glass with every meal and also in between meals.



Alternative diets:

It is possible to provide toddlers with a well-balanced vegetarian diet containing eggs and milk/dairy products. Pay attention to the intake of iron and zinc! A strict vegan diet is not recommended.³

Eating is a learning process¹

Parents are the most important role models!
They promote healthy eating habits in their children.



Important steps to take in this regard:

- Create a relaxed and calm environment for shared meals.
- Introduce regular mealtimes, e.g. 3 main meals and 2 smaller snacks.
- Keep 2- to 3-hour breaks between meals → no snacks or sugary drinks during those breaks!
- Strengthen the ability of self-regulation by respecting the physical signs of hunger and satiety.
- The parents decide which foods to offer and the child decides how much they want to eat. Rejected foods should be offered several times.
- The level of consumption differs from child to child and is sufficient if the child is healthy, active and satisfied.
- Food should not be used as a reward or punishment.

Products **specifically geared towards toddlers** need to have an age indication ("1 – 3 years"). Only then do they comply with the dietary regulations.

During the transition from an infant diet to a toddler diet, there is a **greater risk of deficiencies** (especially of iodine, iron, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids). The consumption of **growing-up milk** can lower the risk of deficiency of these nutrients.⁴

Growing-up milk should not contain fructose or sucrose. Artificial flavourings should also be avoided so as not to disturb the development of the children's gustatory system.⁵

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References:

1 Koletzko B et al., Handlungsempfehlungen Ernährung und Bewegung im Kleinkindalter, Monatsschr Kinderheilkd Sonderdruck Dez. 2022 • 2 D-A-CH Referenzwerte für die Nährstoffzufuhr 2015: Wasser: 3 • 3 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung: Vegane Ernährung: Nährstoffversorgung und Gesundheitsrisiken im Kleinkind- und Säuglingsalter 2011; DGEinfo 58:48-51 • 4 EFSA Journal 2013, 11: 3408 • 5 Koletzko B et al., Folgenahrungen für Kleinkinder im Alter von einem bis 3 Jahren (sog. Kindermilchgetränke). Monatsschr Kinderheilkd 2017; DOI 10.1007/s00112-017-0311-3.

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