

Nutrition

During the second year most parents notice that their child isn't growing as fast as during the first year of life. Most children only gain 5 to 7 pounds over this second year. This is quite a contrast to the first year of life when most babies triple their birth weight. Gradually over the second year your child will change from looking like a plump baby with "baby fat" on the arms, legs, and face to a leaner, more muscular toddler. You may still notice a somewhat bulging belly and "sway back" at this age. This is usually normal.

Along with this slow-down in weight gain most parents also notice a drop in their toddler's appetite. Suddenly your child may be picky about what he eats, turns his head after a few bites, or resists sitting down at mealtimes. He may even refuse foods which he liked just yesterday. As frustrating as this is, just remember, your child's growth rate has slowed and he doesn't require as much food now. Most children this age require about 1000 calories of food a day. If you've ever counted calories before, you'll know that this isn't a lot of food.

Try not to turn mealtimes into a battle. The harder you push the less likely he is to cooperate with you. Offer a variety of nutritious foods at each meal, and let him choose what he wants. Vary tastes and consistencies. If he rejects everything, try saving the plate for later. Don't allow him to fill up on cookies and sweets. Sweets should be a special treat, not an everyday routine. If you keep offering wholesome foods to your child, his diet should balance out over a few days or a week.

Toddlers are usually able to share most family foods and have their meals with the family. At times spices will need to be reduced or omitted from foods to be suitable for a toddler. If your meals are well balanced and nutritious, you should be able to simply mince or mash your toddler's portion. You may still need to keep some prepared baby foods around for those times when your family is eating fast food or other foods that are not appropriate for a 15 month old. In fact, this is a good time for parents to reevaluate their own eating habits, and make changes if needed, to set a good example for their children.

The following is a list of the basic food groups and guidelines for feeding your toddler.

- **Dairy Group: Milk, cheese, yogurt**
 - Sixteen ounces (2 cups) of milk will supply all of your toddler's dairy needs. In fact excessive milk intake will suppress your child's appetite and can be associated with anemia. Limit cow's milk intake to 18 ounces at most. Your child should be drinking from a cup at this age, not a bottle.
 - Whole milk should be offered until your child is two years old. Brain growth is rapid at this age and needs fat. At two years of age, children should be switched to 1% or skim milk.
 - Milk products are also good sources of calcium, especially if your toddler doesn't drink 16 ounces of milk a day.
 - The Recommended Daily Allotment (RDA) for calcium at this age is 500 mg.
 - The calcium contents of milk and milk products are listed below:
 - 8 ounces of whole milk – 300mg calcium
 - 1 ounce of cheese – 200mg calcium
 - 1 cup of yogurt – 200mg calcium
- **Meat and other Proteins**
 - Two servings a day of foods from this group are needed.
 - A serving of meat, fish or poultry for this age is one ounce (about 1/3rd the size of a deck of cards)
 - One egg is equal to two protein servings for this age (no more than 3 eggs a week are recommended)
 - One fourth cup (2 ounces or 4 tablespoons) of beans is a single serving of protein.
- **Fruit**
 - Two to three servings a day of fruit are recommended
 - Half of a small fresh fruit is a single serving.
 - One fourth cup (2 ounces or 4 tablespoons) of canned (in natural juices, not syrup) or frozen fruit is a serving.
 - Four ounces of 100% fruit juice is a serving (four ounces a day is plenty of juice, certainly don't give more than six ounces of juice a day).
- **Vegetables**
 - Two to three servings a day of vegetables are recommended.
 - Two ounces (2 ounces or 4 tablespoons) of cooked vegetables is a single serving.
 - Raw vegetables are not appropriate at this age, as they are a choking hazard.
- **Grains**
 - Four to six servings a day of grains are recommended (at least half should be whole grain)
 - One slice of bread is two servings at this age.
 - One fourth cup (2 ounces or 4 tablespoons) of cooked cereals, rice, or pasta is a single serving.
 - One half cup (4 ounces) of dry cereal is a single serving.
 - Two to three crackers (preferably whole grain) are a single serving.

- **Final Comments:** Sweets like candy, sodas (liquid candy), cookies, and cake should be thought of as an occasional treat, not part of your child's daily diet. Fatty foods of little nutritional value, like chips and french fries, should be avoided. **It is very important to offer nutritious food to your toddler as he learns to eat and appreciate a variety of table food.**

Dental Care

- Dental caries (tooth decay or "cavities") are caused by infection. Babies pick up the germs that cause cavities from the people around them. Ways to help reduce exposure to cavities-causing bacteria and reducing your child's chances of early cavities include:
 - Do not share eating utensils or drinks with your baby.
 - Do not clean a dropped pacifier with your own mouth.
- Other ways to prevent caries:
 - Brush your child's teeth twice daily with a soft nylon toothbrush using a small amount of toothpaste. Use non-fluoride toothpaste until you are sure that your child is not swallowing the toothpaste.
 - Eliminate all bottle use. Certainly don't allow a bottle to be taken to bed.
 - Make healthy food choices throughout the day. Frequent sweets increase tooth decay.
- Children at high risk for tooth decay should see a dentist within six months after their first tooth erupts. High caries risk children include:
 - Children with special health care needs, chronic illnesses
 - Children who sleep with a bottle or breast-feed during the night at this age.

For more information about dental care visit the pediatric dentistry website at aapd.org.

Development

- **Social/Emotional.**
 - Most 15 month old children are whirlwinds of activity and curiosity, usually lacking caution or a sense of limits. Just a few months or even weeks ago, your child learned to walk and was teetering about, now most 15 month olds are walking well and using this new skill to explore their world. This is a very unsafe time in your child's life. Children this age need constant attention and guidance from their families and caretakers. Don't be discouraged; this is also a very fun age. Along with their new found mobility, you will notice the beginnings of complex reasoning skills and an increasing desire to be independent. Watching your child acquire new skills and solve problems as she figures out her world can be as delightful for you as it is for her.
 - Along with these new skills, most toddlers develop greater expectations and desires in every area of their lives. You should notice a growing desire to explore and be independent. These increased desires and expectations often outstrip physical and reasoning abilities, leading to frustration and anger. Toddlers this age often are resistant to being dressed, diapered or put to bed. She will get upset when she's unable to accomplish a task, when she cannot make someone understand her request, and when she cannot do exactly what she wants to do. Crying and screaming at this age often escalate into temper tantrums.
 - On the other hand, despite your child's desire to be independent, stranger anxiety and separation anxiety are common at this age. This can be frustrating for the entire family, but it is a normal phase.
 - This is a critical period of learning for both parents and children. In the long run everyone will be happier if parents learn to offer their child the freedom to explore within safe boundaries and respond to their needs while not catering to their constant demands. Finding the balance between allowing freedom to explore and providing a safe and structured environment can be difficult, but is important for the entire family, especially your toddler.
 - **Tips:**
 - Whenever possible, allow your child to choose between two options. For example, let her decide between a banana and applesauce for a snack, or between two of her favorite books for naptime story. Allowing her to make choices in some areas will decrease power struggles in others.
 - Praise your child when she is being friendly and cooperative.
 - Encourage your child to participate in daily routines such as brushing teeth, family mealtime, bedtime story and a bedtime routine. Predictable routines are reassuring to children.
 - Teach your toddler not to hit, bite or use aggressive behaviors. Model this behavior yourself by not hitting or spanking your toddler.
 - Never make fun of her fears or anxiety.
 - Don't force her to confront people who scare her, such as clowns or Santa Claus. Accept her fear and reassure her that you are there. Make her feel safe.
- **Cognitive/ Learning.**
 - Your child is busy learning all day long. Every situation, game, or toy is an opportunity to learn. Look closely and you will see her constantly gathering facts and making decisions as she plays. She will touch, shake, twist, pull, and unfortunately taste new items in her world as she constantly explores and solves problems. The trick for parents is finding a activities that are appropriate for her learning level.

- Children this age are learning to visualize objects that are not present. They are starting to realize that a world exists beyond what they can see. In a simple way, her love for hide and seek games illustrates this new skill. On a more complex level, if she has seen a place where a parent goes, like the workplace or a store, and has this place explained, she will gradually learn to visualize and understand where you go.
- Cause and effect are not well understood at this age. She may understand something about a behavior or an object, but she can't always understand how one action or thing might affect another. For example, she knows that running is fun, but she doesn't understand that running down a hill will result in a fall. Even suffering consequences like a fall will not necessarily teach her a lesson. She will probably not associate the tumble with running down the hill. "Common sense" and understanding consequences takes a long time to develop.
- Tips:
 - Try to notice if your child can understand and follow simple commands like "bring mommy your shoe" or "wave bye-bye to sister". Use simple and clear instructions.
 - Read to your child at a regular time every day. Books do not have to be "read". You can use simple words and just talk about the pictures and the story. Reading helps your child practice paying attention and is a way to share experiences with other family members.
 - Provide a range of toys and activities for your child, so that she can find an activity appropriate for her rapidly evolving development level. Some examples of toys appropriate for this age group include blocks, boxes, baskets, simple shape sorters, dolls, cars, trucks, trains, unbreakable containers, floating bath toys, balls, push and pull toys, and unbreakable mirrors of various sizes. Toys that are too hard or too easy will quickly be discarded. Let her decide what to play with.
 - Offer toys that represent objects in your toddler's life, such as a play kitchen with plastic food, a mini-grocery cart, or a toy phone.
 - Be prepared to repeat actions over and over with your toddler. This repetition strengthens the connections in the brain that help children master new skills.

- **Language/Speech**

Fifteen month olds are busy learning to communicate. They use a combination of gestures and sounds to let you know what they are thinking. Your toddler will develop nonverbal communication skills, such as pointing, clapping and waving, before she is able to say any words. Pointing is an important part of a toddler communication. Most toddlers point when they want something, point at pictures in books, and give commands by pointing. You will know that she is developing language skills, when you notice that she is starting to understand simple commands. Around this time most parents start to notice the beginnings of true speech and word formation.

- **Common speech and language milestones at this age:**

- Most toddlers will understand when asked to go to another room to find an object. "Where is your bunny? Is your bunny in the kitchen?"
- Most toddlers can say four or five words in addition to "Mama" and "Dada". At this age pronunciation is difficult. A word for a toddler is a sound or sounds that are used consistently to mean something. "Ti" for sister Tina is a word. Dropping the end of a word is normal at this age.
- Some toddlers this age can imitate a two word phrase like "All gone", "Stop that."

Tips to promote communication and language development:

- Talk together: Point out and name the things you see together. Ask what it is, then wait a few seconds until you offer the answer. Respond with pleasure to her attempts to imitate words. Research shows the more parents talk with their children, the bigger the children's vocabularies.
- Share books together: Allow her to hold the book. Point to pictures as you read together. Ask her to point at objects in the story. "Where is the kitty?"
- Sing: Share books that can be sung like "Wheels on the Bus". Encourage your child to sing with you. Make up songs about daily life. "Time for beddie Freddie...Freddie ready for beddie..." or whatever. Singing teaches the rhythm of language and shows a fun side of language.
- Narrate your child's gestures: For example, if she points at a ball on the counter, say, "Sally is pointing at the ball. Do you want the ball?"
- Help your child learn the language of feelings by using words that describe feelings and emotions. "I'm so happy when we go for a walk".
- Introduce ideas such as up/down and big/little in books and in conversation.
- Avoid television or video viewing until your child is at least two years old. Do not place a television in your child's room at any age.

- If two languages are spoken in the home or community, your child will learn both languages. Her early language development might be a little slower, but she will soon catch up. Even if she does not remember and maintain her second language, there is evidence to suggest that learning another language early in life will give long-term intellectual benefits.
- **Gross Motor (Movement) Skills**
The vast majority of children can walk well by 15 months; however, some children will take another two or three months to begin walking. Falling frequently is common for several months after a child begins to walk. At first she'll trip on small irregularities like carpet wrinkles or an incline into another room, but after about two or three months of walking your child will have the entire process under control. She should be able to stoop and pick up objects, be able to push or pull a toy wagon, step sideways and backward, and even throw a ball while walking. After six months of walking most toddlers can run, although most children run rather stiffly until after their 2nd birthday.

Tips:

- Hold your child's hand or hands to provide balance and encourage steps if your child is not walking.
- Push and pull toys help toddlers practice walking forwards, backwards and sideways while helping with balance.
- Provide large balls for your child to play with. Playing with large balls teaches a toddler to stoop and recover. Eventually she will also figure out how to toss the ball.
- Supervise attempts to go up or down stairs. Most 15 month olds can crawl up stairs but are unable to walk up stairs until about 18 months of age.

Fine Motor (Hand and Finger)

Not only is your 15 month old walking (or almost walking), but she is mastering use of her hands, both alone and in coordination with her eyes. These new hand and finger skills will allow her to have much more control and precision as she examines objects and tries new movements. Watch how she manipulates objects with her hands, exploring all the ways they can be combined and changed. Not only do these skills expand her ability to explore her world, but they help teach spatial concepts like in, on, and under.

Tips

- Provide a variety of containers to give her an opportunity to place objects inside and then dump them out again. Place a small toy in a box or basket and see if your toddler imitates you.
- Provide blocks or toys that can be stacked. Most toddlers this age can stack 2 to 3 objects on one another.
- Play with a small ball and encourage her to throw the ball.
- Other toys that involve fine motor skills include connecting toys (links, large stringing beads) and pegboards.
- Give your toddler a spoon at mealtimes and encourage self-feeding. Fine motor and hand-eye coordination skills are needed in order to self-feed with a spoon. Self-feeding also satisfies a 15 month olds desire for independence.

Safety

Children this age are particularly prone to injuries. Injuries are the leading cause of death in children less than four years of age. Toddlers need constant supervision. Make sure that all caretakers, such as relatives or child care providers, follow the following safety guidelines.

- **Falls**
 - Use gates at both top and bottom of stairs.
 - To keep children from falling out of windows, keep furniture away from windows and install window guards on second and higher story windows.
 - Lock doors to dangerous areas of the house.
 - Remove sharp-edged furniture from the rooms that your child plays and sleeps in. Coffee tables and fireplaces are common sources of lacerations when children tumble into them. Cover their sharp corners.
- **Poisonings**
 - Remove poisons and toxic household products from your home or keep them high and outreach in locked cabinets.
 - Have safety caps on all medications and lock them away.
 - Keep the Poison Control Center number (1-800-222-1222) near every telephone and add it to your cell phone. Call immediately if there is a poisoning.
 - If there is a poisoning emergency, do not make your child vomit.
- **Burns**
 - Do not leave containers of hot liquids on tables with tablecloths that your child might pull down.
 - Turn pan handles towards the back of the stove. Keep your child away from the stove and preferably out of the kitchen during meal preparation.
 - Keep your child away from fireplaces, irons, curling irons and space heaters.
 - Make sure that you have a working smoke detector on every level of your home. Test smoke detectors every month. It is best to use a smoke detector with long-life batteries, but, if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.

- Develop an escape plan from your home in the event of a fire.
- The water heater should be set at 120 °F or lower.
- **Drowning**
 - Never leave your child alone in or near a bath tub, pail of water, pool or any other water, even for a moment. Stay within arm's length of your child when you are around water.
 - Keep bathroom doors shut.
 - If you have a pool, fence all 4 sides with a fence at least 4 feet high.
- **Sun Exposure**
 - Avoid the sun between the hours of 10 am to 4 pm.
 - If outside, stay in the shade, use a hat to protect your child's face, and use a sunscreen with an SPF pf at least 15.
- **Car Safety.**
 - Make sure that your child is fastened securely in a car safety seat every time he rides in a car. Questions about proper installation should be referred to a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician in the community. You can find a Child Safety Technician closest to you by checking the Child Safety Seat Inspection Station Locator: seatcheck.org or 866-seatcheck (866-732-8243).
 - Never place your child's car safety seat in the front seat. Children less than 12 years of age should sit properly restrained in the back seat.
 - Keep your child in a rear-facing safety seat until he reaches the highest weight or height allowed for rear-facing use by the safety seat manufacturer. Most convertible car seats have 30-35 pound rear-facing weight limits; some are as high as 40 pounds. **Safety experts are now recommending that children remain in rear-facing safety seat until 2 years of age. Serious injuries are five times more likely to occur if your 12 to 23 month old child is in a forward-facing rather than a rear-facing safety seat.**
 - Do not leave your child alone in the car. Death from excess heat in a closed car may occur quickly in warm weather.
 - Before backing up at home, always walk behind your car to be sure that your child is not there. You may not see a small child if you only rely on your rear view mirror.

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Programs

The State of Texas has a network of local community programs (Early Childhood Intervention or ECI) that provide services to Texas families and their children, birth to age three, with developmental delays. The cost of services provided is based on family income. Children are eligible for ECI services if they are under age 3 and have developmental delays or conditions (such as Down's, prematurity, vision or hearing impairments) that have a high possibility of resulting in a developmental delay. Anyone may refer a child for ECI services. If you believe that your child is delayed or has a condition that could lead to delays, call 1-800-682-5115 or visit the ECI website at www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis for the ECI program closest to you.

Reading Suggestions and Resources

We encourage all parents to invest in one or more reference book on child care and child development. The following are a few books and websites that we can recommend:

- **Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5**, The American Academy of Pediatrics.
- **Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age 5**, Penelope Leach.
- **Baby 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for Your Toddler**, Ari Brown, Denise Fields.
- **Siblings without Rivalry**, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, Avon Books.
- www.healthychildren.org, A new parenting website developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- www.fabermazlish.com, Parenting website
- www.aap.org, The American Academy of Pediatrics
- www.cdc.gov/nip, National Immunization Program. Federal government sponsored online information about vaccines.
- www.vaccine.chop.edu, Information about vaccines from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia