### **Understanding Your Toddler:**

### Tips for Helping Toddlers Eat

Your toddler's appetite changes from day to day or even meal to meal. Every child will refuse foods sometimes. It is a normal part of growing up. Understanding why your toddler behaves the way he does can make mealtime easier.



## Your toddler is growing more slowly.

#### What You May See:

- Some days she barely eats anything.
- She does not eat as much as other children.
- She does not finish her food.
- She was eating more and more, but the amount has not increased lately.



#### Tips to Try:

- Watch for cues to know when she is hungry and full. Try not to worry about how much she eats at each meal.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods each day and throughout the week.
- Start by offering one small portion. Offer more if she finishes and shows you she is still hungry.

## Your toddler is getting better at remembering things.

#### What You May See:

- He will not try new foods.
- He will only eat a few foods.
- He will not eat whole groups of foods, such as green vegetables.
- He prefers milk, juice, or other drinks over foods.
- He will not let anyone else feed him.

#### Tips to Try:

- Keep favorite foods that are not offered at mealtime out of sight.
- Offer foods many times, but do not pressure him to eat them. It is important for him to see, smell, and touch foods, even if he does not taste them.
- Be patient! It may take time for him to get used to new foods.



### Your toddler likes routines.

#### What You May See:

- He will not eat unless he has his specific plate or bowl.
- He often fusses when fed in a different place than usual.
- He cries when given food instead of his bottle.

#### Tips to Try:

- Use a simple mealtime routine that works for you and your family.
- Be consistent when creating a new routine. It will take time for your toddler to learn the new steps.
- Ask WIC for more information about using routines to help your toddler be calm and cooperative.



# Your toddler is learning about food and how to use her fingers to feed herself.

#### What You May See:

- She makes a mess with the food.
- She refuses to eat from the spoon.
- She wants to feed herself.
- She plays with food instead of eating.
- She drops the food on the floor.

#### Tips to Try:

- Try giving her foods that she can safely pick up and eat with her fingers.
- Let her have time to explore new foods. She will be more likely to try them later.
- Keep a damp washcloth nearby during meals and snacks for quick cleanup.



# Your toddler must practice new skills, like standing, walking, and running.

#### What You May See:

- She will not sit still.
- She does not like to eat in the high chair.

#### Tips to Try:

- Give your toddler lots of time to practice new skills throughout the day.
- Make mealtime social! Talking to her while she is in her high chair may help her sit still.





# Your toddler cannot always ignore the sights and sounds around him.

#### What You May See:

- He does not pay attention to eating.
- He prefers snacking instead of full meals.
- He takes too long to eat.
- He would rather play with the phone than eat.

#### Tips to Try:

- Limit noisy distractions during mealtime. For example, if he is distracted by the TV, he may not be able to focus on eating.
- Keep the phone and other items he cannot play with out of sight.
- Sit close to him and talk about the food he is eating.



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