

NUTRITION

A child's serving is approximately one tablespoon of food for each year of the child's age. For example, if the child is three, he/she needs about three tablespoons of carrots to get one serving from the fruit and vegetable group.

One cup of milk or two slices of cheese or one-half cup of cottage cheese make up one serving from the dairy group.

At the beginning of the toddler stage, children like to use their improved coordination and small motor skills to feed themselves. These first self-feeding experiences will be messy. Not until children reach about 18 months of age will they be able to feed themselves, using a spoon, with little spilling.

Toddlers like finger foods such as cheese chunks, thin vegetable slices, peas, sections of hard cooked eggs, pieces of bread/sandwiches, melon pieces, and banana pieces.

During the second year of life, the child becomes very independent and mealtimes can be nightmares for parents. Giving the child choices can be helpful. For example, if a child wants cookies for breakfast try saying, "Cookies are not a good food for breakfast. Would you like pancakes or mush?" This gives them a chance to be involved in the decision of what they will eat.

During the second year, children should be able to feed themselves without any help. They should begin to use a small fork as well as a knife to spread or cut foods that are soft.

When children show a desire to sit at the table instead of a high chair, a booster seat should be introduced. This usually occurs between age two and three.

By age three, children have all of their primary or baby teeth. Therefore, they should be able to eat all the food that the family eats. Meat still should be cut into small pieces.

TEACHER NOTE: An excellent resource is "As They Grow" magazine from Gerber. Write or call and tell them how many magazines you need:

Bristol-Meyer Squibb Company
Attn. Tammy Fisher (P-30)
2400 W. Lloyd Expressway
Evansville, Indiana 47721
PHONE: 812-429-8438

Following are some helpful hints concerning toddlers, food, and mealtime:

1. Mealtimes should be on a regular schedule.
2. Parents and other siblings should model good attitudes about food.
3. Serve small proportions.
4. Do not force feed or show anger during mealtime.
5. Keep mealtimes pleasant and positive.
6. Try to eat together as a family.
7. Provide child-sized eating utensils and dishes.
8. Offer only one new food at a time.
9. Never use food as a punishment or a bribe. Eating is an expected behavior. Even saying, "You cannot have a brownie until you finish eating your vegetables," teaches children that vegetables are bad and brownies are good.
10. Make food look appealing in color, shape, and size. (You may ask the class if they have seen the movie "Mermaids." The mom, who was played by Cher, always prepared fun, interesting, and exciting foods. You may wish to show the students a children's recipe book with fun looking food in them.)
11. Remove the food from the child when there is more playing than eating.
12. Allow the child to help set the table, put spoons in bowls, and prepare simple foods.