

Toddlers 12-23 Months

Supporting Growth & Development



After their first birthday, as babies transition from human milk or iron-fortified infant formula, whole milk and other dairy foods emerge as critically important sources of calories and essential nutrients to fuel brain development and growth spurts.¹



Dairy's Unique Contributions

Within the first 12 months, a baby's brain doubles in size and triples to almost adult size by 36 months. To fuel this incredible expansion, the infant brain alone uses over 50% of consumed daily calories. Whole milk provides a concentrated source of calories and nutrients during this time.²

Milk

Milk is considered one of the top food sources for several vitamins and minerals.¹



Protein helps build muscle.



Calcium, vitamin D and phosphorus help build strong bones and teeth.



B vitamins, like B12 and riboflavin, help turn food into fuel.



Protein, zinc, selenium and vitamins A and D help support a healthy immune system.



Iodine is linked to cognitive function in childhood.

Special Considerations



Toddlers are endlessly curious and at mealtimes it is no different. Though it may get messy, toddlers will want to try what the rest of the family is enjoying as they test out new tastes, textures and fine motor skills.

Recommended Daily Dairy Servings^{3,4}



1²/₃ – 2 cups

(for those no longer consuming breastmilk or iron-fortified formula)

This can be easily divided into several 1/2 cup (milk and yogurt) and 1/2 oz (cheese) servings throughout the day.





Make Every Bite & Sip Count

- ✓ Introduce a new food alongside a familiar food in the same meal.
- ✓ It may take several attempts – more than eight times even – for babies and toddlers to accept new foods.⁵ Patience will pay off.
- ✓ Offer milk from a sippy-cup instead of a bottle to help toddlers build skills needed to transition them to an open cup.
- ✓ Toddlers know when they are full, so don't worry about them cleaning their plate – this will distort their innate hunger and fullness cues.
- ✓ Remember that making a mess is all part of the learning process. Encourage babies and toddlers to smell, feel and explore their food.



Simple Pairings to Try*

- ✓ Turkey and cheese pinwheels
- ✓ Mini whole wheat English muffin pizzas
- ✓ Cheese quesadillas with whole wheat tortillas and smashed avocado
- ✓ Yogurt parfaits



*Pairings are provided as nutritious examples – other combinations are possible.

Sources

- Analyses of NHANES 2013-2014 & 2015-2016 data conducted by Victor Fulgoni, PhD. Analyses conducted using SAS 9.4 and SUDAAN 11 with survey parameters including strata, primary sampling units and dietary sample weights. Means were calculated using SAS proc survey means and percentages were calculated using SUDAAN proc ratio.
- Murray, Bob. The Amazing Baby Brain Part 1: What Does Nutrition Have To Do With It? May 2018. Accessed on November 24, 2020 from <https://www.usdairy.com/news-articles/the-amazing-baby-brain-part-1>.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Accessed at <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. MyPlate. Dairy - What foods are included in the dairy group? 2020. Accessed at <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/dairy>.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. MyPlate. Toddlers - Picky eating. 2020. Accessed at <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/toddlers>.



Milk, yogurt and cheese are foundational foods that help nourish people throughout life. Dairy foods, including lactose-free varieties, are highly nutritious and accessible options that help fill nutrient gaps and contribute to healthy eating patterns. To learn more about how dairy foods help people thrive across the lifespan, visit USDairy.com.

