

Food, activity and weight growth

Children 1-2 years



1. What is a normal food day for your child?

Try to create pleasure in eating and a pleasant atmosphere. All children benefit from set mealtimes with breakfast, lunch, evening meal and 2-3 snacks. For a large snack it is recommended that there should be fruit or vegetables and a sandwich and a glass of milk. A small snack may consist of one fruit or one vegetable.

It may sometimes be difficult to start thinking about snacks and evening meals as soon as lunch has been cleared away, but there is much to be gained by planning. A child that is too hungry may find it hard to eat when the food is at last served. A child may eat well on some days and less well on others, which is quite normal. Children may also have periods of not wanting certain foods; this usually passes. Continue to offer the child food even if the child does not want it. Don't nag the child to "eat it up" or not to "take more than one helping" but let the child eat his or her food in a relaxed atmosphere.



2. What do you think of your child's eating habits?

Many people think young children dislike certain foods such as anchovy, various spices and strong tastes, which is often not the case. The child may need to try a new taste or a new food several times before he or she likes it. Gradually the child's food habits and meals will fall in line with those of adults. The child does what you do. Do you set a good example?

Sweets and sweet drinks should be avoided. Children easily develop a liking for sweet foods, which can be a difficult habit to break. If it is hard to avoid sweets it is best to offer these no more than once a week.

A child also needs to learn to eat during the day and to sleep at night. It is good to get out of the habit of night feeds.

3. How do you comfort your child?

If the child is tired or upset it is easy to use food, drink or sweets for comfort. What other ways are there of comforting your child?

4. What do you know about keyhole-marked food?

Children from the age of 1 are recommended to eat keyhole-marked food and to drink skimmed milk or water.

Keyhole-marked food may for example be skimmed milk, fibre-rich bread/pasta/rice and vegetables/fruit. But little children do not need as much fibre in their food as adults. The National Food Administration recommends that children, too, should eat smaller amounts of saturated fat and more unsaturated fat.



5. What vegetables and fruits does your child like?

It is very important to offer fruit and vegetables to the child in the form of chopped/diced pieces of fruit and vegetables as snacks between meals, in fermented milk and with meals. Do you offer your child fruit and vegetables at every meal?



6. What does your child drink at mealtimes, between meals and when thirsty?

Skimmed milk and water are good drinks for meals. Water is the best thirst- quencher. Squashes and fizzy drinks are not a drink for daily consumption and should be limited to 2-3 glasses per week.

Replacing prepared food with gruel or large amounts of milk gives neither training in chewing nor good food habits.

7. What do you think about your child's weight?

Parents' concerns about the child's weight should be taken seriously, whether the child is underweight or overweight.

Sitting down together and eating as a family or with adults has a favourable effect on weight growth.

8. What does your child like doing?

Children develop from unstructured play. It develops the child's imagination, communication, social interaction, motor skills and coordination.

The National Food Administration recommends at least 60 minutes' physical activity a day for children. Small children are very active. They like walking, running and not sitting in a pram too much. Physical activity stimulates mental development and the child's capacity for thinking.

Playing in the woods, climbing on boulders and carrying branches is fun.



9. How much does your child watch TV or sit at a computer?

Many paediatricians recommend parents not to let children aged under two watch TV. When watching TV the child loses time for active play and motor development.

Does your child watch TV? A little child needs to have an adult beside her or him.

Eating in front of the television increases the risk of the child eating more than he or she needs, which increases the risk of obesity.

For the central Child Health Care team, Västra Götaland Region

Task force: Anna Melin Andersen (MBHV dietist, Södra Bohuslän), Henri Toivonen (BHVÖl, Skaraborg), Mona Bryggman (MBHV psychologist, Fyrbodals), Christina Djäken (coordination nurse, BHV Skaraborg), Gun-Britt Szymanski (BHV assistant, Södra Älvsborg).