

## **TOP 5 TODDLER EATING ISSUES: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

From 13 months onwards, your child will experience various eating and [feeding milestones](#). These include:

- Taking bites from larger pieces of food, such as a soft cookie
- Better biting skills
- Improved control over lips and tongue
- Rotary chewing
- Using a spoon and fork to feed himself

By age two, your child will also be able to eat all types of foods.

Certain eating and feeding issues, however, can prevent or delay your child from meeting these crucial milestones. It is important that you find a way to handle these issues properly and quickly; this way, your child doesn't miss out on any essential nutrients he needs daily, and you can help him develop good eating habits which he can continue to practice as he gets older.

Here are the **top five toddler eating and feeding issues** you need to watch out for, plus some tips for helping your child overcome them:

### **1. Picky eating**

Nearly all kids go through the phase of picky eating. Children as young as one year old will exhibit this unhealthy eating habit. Some kids will overcome this eating issue quickly while others won't.

The big issue with picky eating is that your toddler **is missing out on a lot of essential nutrients he needs for his growth and development**. In addition, he will fail to try or discover new foods – foods that he may learn to love eating.

You can help your toddler overcome this issue through the following ways:

- **Don't stop serving foods your child dislikes.** Consistency and patience are crucial to helping your kids overcome picky eating. Even if your toddler won't touch broccoli, find ways to serve them differently. If your toddler loves mac and cheese, try adding them to this dish.
- **Give your child small portions.** Encourage him to try just one or two spoonfuls – don't force him to finish every bite.
- **During meal or snack times, give your child a variety of healthy foods he can choose from.** Serve a combination of his favorites and new dishes or snacks. Encourage your child to try them all, but let him select which ones to fill up on.
- **Stop being a short order cook.** Your child will continue being a fussy eater if you keep cooking his favorite dish every time he refuses to eat what is on the table.
- **Be a role model.** Whenever you put a new dish on the table or give your toddler a fruit or veggie he hasn't tried before, eat the food and show him how much you like it. Your child will be more likely to try the new dish or food if he sees you trying and enjoying them.

### **2. Gagging**

Gagging is a natural reflex that everyone feels or does every now and then. However, toddlers often gag due to the following reasons:

- He has something inedible in his mouth
- He has too much food in his mouth
- He is eating something that is too big or hard
- He is eating too fast
- He doesn't like the taste or texture of what he's eating

If your child seems to be gagging or choking every time eats, here are some tips that will help stop your child from doing this or, at the very least, limit the frequency:

- Make sure you cut your toddler's foods (especially meats, hot dogs and carrots) into bite-size pieces
- Teach your little one to pick up only one piece of food at a time and to chew methodically and swallow before taking another bite
- Make sure you or another adult is always with your child whenever he is eating
- Instill in your child the habit of staying seated and relaxed during meals

### 3. Food allergies

According to health experts, approximately 90 percent of food allergies are **caused by milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish**. If your family has a history of food allergies and eczema, your toddler will have a higher risk of having these as well, even at an early age.

Aside from having your child tested for food allergies, the other way to know if he is allergic to certain foods is to let him taste different products or items as soon as he's tried and tolerated other solids such like cereals, fruits, and veggies. You can do this as early as four months, but before 12 months. Make sure, however, **give him derivatives or mixtures such as peanut butter, wheat bread, etc. to avoid the risk of choking**.

Many kids outgrow their allergies to milk, egg, soy, and wheat during childhood. Giving your toddler **age and developmentally appropriate and safe forms and serving sizes of allergenic foods** will help them overcome these allergies as well. It is best to consult your child's pediatrician before introducing allergenic foods to your toddler.

Lastly, **always introduce new or possibly allergenic foods at home**. Observe your baby or toddler for allergic reactions hours after mealtime. If he continues to be lively and appears normal, he's in the clear. However, if he seems sluggish or restless and shows other signs and symptoms of food allergy (hives, spots, difficulty breathing, etc.), call your pediatrician right away.

### 4. Refusing to eat

The eating habits of toddlers are erratic and ever-changing; you might have no problems feeding him anything one week, but the next week, he won't want to eat anything at all.

Although it can be worrisome to see your child not eating anything at all, before you panic, consider what he's eaten over the course of one week. **If his food intake balances out, there is no cause for worry**. However, if he isn't getting enough calories and nutrients and he's even losing weight, you will have to work on your feeding strategy.

- **During meal or snack times, offer a variety of healthy food choices. Allow your child to feed himself.** Encourage him to try the dishes or snacks but don't force him to do so.
- **Whenever possible, have meals as a family.** If your child sees you and other adults or older kids eating healthy foods, he will likely follow along.
- **Don't give your child snacks close to mealtimes.** Make sure you schedule their snack and mealtimes properly.

- **Limit his intake of sweets, sodas, and junk foods.** Avoid feeding him these foods especially before mealtimes.
- **Avoid threatening or bargaining with your toddler.** To raise a healthy eater, you have to keep mealtimes positive all the time and don't use foods as a reward.

## 5. Power struggles at the table

If your child is a picky eater or refuses to eat all, it can be hard to avoid arguments at the table. However, **mealtimes are opportunities for the family to talk and bond, not to fight over food.** You can avoid fights and power struggles during mealtimes by following these tips:

- **Try not to talk about food at the table.** Simply serve the meal without saying anything about the dishes. Don't talk about your child's eating habits at the table either.
- **Serve a variety of healthy food choices during mealtimes.** However, don't force your toddler to eat or taste something.
- During mealtimes, **serve at least one dish or food your child likes.**

No matter how many issues you encounter when feeding your toddler, keep in mind that your child needs the right amount and quality of essential nutrients he needs for proper growth and development. You can be sure your child continuously gets the nutrients he needs by giving him breastmilk or [Similac 3 with probiotics](#) every day and being consistent with serving him varied, well-balanced meals.