



CHILD CARE FROM AGE 2 1/2 TO 3 YEARS

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SUGGESTED DIET: The following is an ideal diet selected from the four food groups, but recognize that your child will not always eat a balanced diet every day. All children over the age of two should follow the same recommended low-fat, low-cholesterol diet that you do. It is not necessary to totally eliminate higher fat foods from your child's diet, rather serve them in moderation and balance them with more frequent servings of lower fat choices. Have a goal that half all snacks and meals be fruits and vegetables.

1. **Milk & Dairy Products:** 2 to 3 servings (6-8 oz. per serving) per day. Your child may drink whatever milk the rest of the family does (1% or less). Other milk products include yogurt and cheese. 1 ounce of cheese is equivalent to about 6 oz. milk.
2. **Meats/Proteins:** 3 servings per day. A serving size is 2 ounces (4 tablespoons). Lean meat, poultry, fish, tofu, legumes, eggs or peanut butter are all good choices. You get the same amount of protein from 1 oz. meat as from 2 T. peanut butter, 1 oz. cheese, 1 egg, or ½ cup cooked beans or peas.
3. **Fruits & Vegetables:** Fill ½ of your child's plate with fruits and vegetables. Try for 1 serving of a fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin A, such as peaches, broccoli, carrots, squash, or sweet potatoes. Serve at least 1 fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C, such as broccoli or spinach. Do not use juice or limit juice to no more than 6 ounces per day of 100% fruit juice.
4. **Breads & Cereals:** 4 servings per day, with a serving size being ½ slice of bread, ½ cup cereal, or 1/3 cup pasta. Try to use products with higher fiber content (whole wheat bread, cereals with higher fiber, oatmeal, and brown rice).
5. **Vitamins:** 600 IU of vitamin D is recommended daily.

FEEDING TIPS

- A decreased appetite or "picky eater" at this age is normal. If you offer the appropriate foods at each meal, and avoid multiple non-nutritious snacks, then your child will receive an adequate diet. Allow your child to feed himself/herself.
- Try to avoid making mealtime a battleground. Respect their food preferences. Some may resist eating certain foods or insist on eating only one or two favorite foods for a period of time. Continue to offer a variety as their likes and dislikes will vary. Toddlers do better sitting for 3 smaller meals along with 2 - 3 healthy snacks a day.
- Some healthy snack suggestions include: fresh fruit, yogurt (low-fat or non-fat), string cheese (part skim milk), dry cereal (whole grain, low in sugar), crackers (whole grain, low-fat), raisins, and graham crackers.
- To avoid choking, don't give nuts, fruits with pits, raw carrots, popcorn, hard candy, gum, and whole grapes and hot dogs. Remember to supervise mealtime, making it free from excitement and running with food. Children should all be sitting while eating.
- Encourage family mealtime. This is an excellent way to support language and social development in your child. Eat together as often as possible, at least 4 to 5 times a week.
- Avoid having the television on during mealtime and set an example by not using your I-pad or cell phone at meals.

DENTAL HEALTH

Continue brushing your child's teeth daily using a small, soft toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride. Fluoride is important for fighting cavities, but if children younger than 6 swallow too much fluoride, their permanent teeth may be discolored. Using no more than a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride can keep this from happening. You may allow your child to brush on their own, then assist them. Now is a good time to establish a dental home for your child with a pediatric dentist. His/her first dental cleaning should be at age 3 years.

SLEEPING

Between ages two and three, your child may sleep from ten to thirteen hours a day. Most preschoolers still require an afternoon nap. At bedtime your child will probably be insistent on adhering to his bedtime ritual (bath, brush teeth, story, drink of water, etc.). If you change this routine, he/she will complain or may even have trouble going to sleep. If they are still in a crib, it may be time to graduate to a big bed, since they may climb out on their own and could fall. Try not to have vigorous play or watch stimulating TV programs with your child in the evening. Quiet evening activities will help your child recognize that bedtime is coming and smoothes the way to the bedtime routine. A good night's sleep is essential to good daytime behavior and to preventing tantrums. Prepare your child for bedtime, leave a night-light on, and let them sleep with their security object. Continue to encourage your child to fall asleep in his or her bed. If he/she still pushes you to your limit, remain calm and consistent in your approach and they will eventually realize they have nothing to gain by fighting you and will start going to sleep more willingly.

Occasionally your child may wake up from a nightmare. Bad dreams are common among preschoolers who still cannot distinguish between imagination and reality. When a nightmare awakens your child, the best response is to comfort them until they are calm enough to fall back asleep.

TOILET TRAINING

Once your child is ready to begin potty training, things should proceed smoothly if you maintain a relaxed, unpressured attitude. Praise him/her for successes, while not even mentioning mistakes along the way. Punishing or making them feel bad when they have an accident will only add an unnecessary element of stress, which is bound to delay their progress.

Switch from diapers to pull-ups or underwear after your child is cooperative about sitting on the potty chair and passes about half of their urine and bowel movements there. Buy loose fitting ones that they can easily lower and pull up on their own. Use diapers only for naps and night time. Disposable pull-ups come in handy for travel.

Continue to praise your child frequently for dryness and using the potty. If your child resists this training effort, back off, and try again next month. If they seem capable but not interested, (especially as they approach their third birthday) try a reward chart using stars or stickers and earning a reward.

DEVELOPMENT/PLAY/PRESCHOOL

Your child may be able to throw a ball overhand, jump up and down in place, wash and dry their hands, and put on their clothes with some help. Their vocabulary is increasing, and often he/she is speaking in 3 to 4 word phrases, most of which should be understandable to family members. Imaginary play, such as with dolls and toys, is increasing. Play is starting to include other children.

- Engage your child in interactive songs, rhymes, and games involving rhythm and movement, such as "*Itsy, Bitsy Spider*".
- Read books together every day. Your child can follow the story line of simple books and may ask you to read the same book again and again.

- Young children process spoken language more slowly than adults do. Be sure to give your preschooler plenty of time to respond when you say something to them.
- Take your child to the library and its story time regularly.
- Limit screen time (TV, DVD's, tablets and computer time) to no more than 1 hour each day, and pay attention to media ratings and guides. A TV in your child's bedroom is not recommended.
- Provide opportunities for your preschooler to play with other children near their age. Be sure to supervise these times, because your child is not ready to share or play cooperatively.
- Consider what sort of early education experience (preschool) will be best for your child, keeping in mind their temperament and level of development. Preschools offer children the opportunity to develop social skills with other children on a regular basis.

DISCIPLINE

2 1/2 year olds are eager to take control. They continue to spend most of their time testing limits - their own, yours, and in their environment. When they overstep a limit and are corrected, expect your child to react with anger and frustration, possibly with a temper tantrum. They want to be more independent than their skills and safety allow; and they want to make decisions, but don't know how to compromise or how to deal with restraint. Although their language is improving, it still may be difficult for them to express their feelings well in words, so instead they act out their frustration by crying or having a tantrum. While these emotional displays are unpleasant, they rarely are dangerous.

- Offering preschoolers limited choices between one of two equally acceptable options helps build your child's independence.
- Try to arrange one-on-one time with each of your children every day (10-15 minutes).
- Continue to follow daily routines for eating, sleeping and playing.

SAFETY

Unintentional injury is the number one cause of death among young children, since the urge to explore and learn is so strong. Your child does not yet have good judgment. You must use constant vigilance to protect your young child from harm.

- Be sure your child's car safety seat is properly installed in the back seat according to the manufacturer's instructions. There should be no more than a finger's width of space between your child's collarbone and the harness strap.
- The back seat is the safest place for children to ride. (www.gahighwaysafety.org)
- Do not start your vehicle until everyone is buckled up. Children watch what parents do, so it is important for you to model safe behaviors by always wearing your safety belt.
- Make sure you have a working smoke detector on every level of your home, especially in the furnace and sleeping areas. Test smoke detectors every month. It is best to use smoke detectors that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least twice a year.
- Watch your preschooler constantly whenever he/she is near water, including bathtubs, play pools, buckets, and the toilet.
- When your child is playing outside, make sure your child stays within fences and gates unless you or the adult supervisor is watching closely. Be sure to buckle your child in the grocery store cart.
- Carefully supervise young children using playground equipment, and make sure that the surface under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall.
- Keep your child away from moving machinery, lawn mowers, overhead garage doors, driveways, alleys, and streets.
- Be sure that your preschooler wears a helmet when riding in a seat on an adult's bicycle or on a tricycle. Wear a helmet yourself.
- Limit time spent in the sun. Put sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) on your child before he/she goes outside. Sunglasses and a hat are also recommended.
- Teach your child to ask permission before approaching dogs, especially if the dogs are unknown or are eating.
- Watch your child closely when you are near a hot grill, the stove, or an open fire.
- Keep all medicine in child resistant containers and out of reach.
- Post the **Poison Control number (404) 616-9000** by your phone and in your contacts on your cell phone.

FEVER MANAGEMENT

You may treat your child's fever with either of the following:

Tylenol (Active ingredient is acetaminophen)

Advil, Motrin (Active ingredient is ibuprofen)

Your child's next well childcare visit should be at 3 years of age.

Additional Resource for Parents

Visit our web site at www.northfultonpediatrics.com

Positive discipline for preschoolers by Jane Nelson

Caring For Your Baby And Young Child: Birth to Age 5, by AAP

www.aap.org/bookstore

www.chop.edu/service/vaccine

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