



CHILD CARE FROM AGE 2 TO 2 1/2 YEARS

www.northfultonpediatrics.com

770-442-1050

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 always be seated while eating.
- Encourage family mealtime.
- Avoid having the television on during mealtime and set an example by not using your I-pads and cell phones at meals.

DENTAL HEALTH

Begin 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 or you may continue to use fluoride free infant toothpaste. You may allow your child to brush on their own and then assist them. His/her first dental cleaning should be at age 3 years.

SLEEPING

Between ages two and three, your child may sleep from nine to thirteen hours a day. Most toddlers still require an afternoon nap. At bedtime your toddler 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. Part of this pattern is due to the typical negativism of this age (refusal to do anything Mom and Dad want them to do), and part is due to lingering separation anxiety. Despite their insistence on independence, they may still feel uneasy when they are left alone in the dark.

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 toddlers 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.

ELIMINATION

Most children are ready to be toilet trained sometime after their second birthday (boys slightly later than girls). Look for the following readiness signs: bowel movements occur on a fairly predictable schedule, diaper is not always wet (which indicates that the bladder is able to store urine), can and will follow instructions, is eager to please you, and shows an interest in imitating other family members in the bathroom. Chances are toilet training won't be very successful until your child is past the negativism and resistance to it that occurs in toddlerhood. Your child must feel in control of the process.

Once your toddler is ready to begin, 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. Purchase a floor level type potty chair. Having the feet reach the floor during training gives your child leverage for pushing and a sense of security. It also offers the freedom of getting on and off at will. This type is also portable. Some children will learn to control their bladders first; other will start with bowel control. Both can be worked on simultaneously. Nighttime dryness normally happens months or years later than daytime control.

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.

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

Your child may be going up and down stairs by himself putting both feet on the step. They may be able to run more easily and may pick up an object without falling. He/she will throw a ball overhand, build a tower of 6 or more blocks, and can draw a circle or straight line by age three. Their vocabulary is growing considerably, and often are speaking in 2 to 3 word phrases. Their speech is becoming easier to understand. Imitative play remains an important part of your child's development, as gross motor and fine motor play. Appropriate toys for improving these functions include: playground equipment; household items such as play kitchen equipment, telephones and dishes. Finger paints and play dough are great play items, but are best done with supervision. Simple household tasks such as dusting a table or sweeping an area with a broom are enjoyable for your child and make him feel a part of the family. Now that your child may be able to turn pages in a book one at a time, allow him to hold the book while you read. Take him to the library to select his books.

No doubt you have heard the expression, the "terrible twos". This developmental period seems like a constant tug of war between your child's continuing reliance on you and his/her need to assert their independence. He may flip-flop between these extremes, clinging to you when you try to leave him, and running in the opposite direction when you want him to listen to you. It is necessary to acknowledge these changes as part of his normal developmental process.

Limit screen time (TV, computer, video, tablets and phones) to no more than 1 hour a day. A TV in your child's bedroom is not recommended. Pay attention to TV ratings guides and online content.

DISCIPLINE

At this age, your two year old wants to explore the world and seek adventure. As a result, they will spend most of their time testing limits - their own, yours, and in the environment. When they overstep a limit and are pulled back, expect your child to react with anger and frustration, possibly with a temper tantrum. Two year olds are eager to take control. They want to be more independent than their skills and safety allow, and they don't appreciate their limits - they want to make decisions, but they don't know how to compromise nor how to deal well with disappointment or restraint. They also can't express their feelings well in words, so instead they act out their anger and frustration by crying or withdrawing, and sometimes by having temper tantrums. While these emotional displays are unpleasant, they rarely are dangerous.

You can't prevent every tantrum, but you may be able to decrease the number by making sure your child does not get overtired, overly anxious, or unnecessarily frustrated. Avoid situations that are more than they can handle, i.e., it is not a good idea to take your child grocery shopping if it is naptime. Be realistic in your expectations; very few two year olds would not protest if they had to spend several hours in a stroller while you shop at the mall. Children whose parents fail to set limits or are overly strict tend to have more frequent and intense tantrums than children whose parents take a moderate approach. As a rule, it is best to set very few limits but to be firm and consistent about those that are set (usually related to safety issues or injury prevention). Expect your child to say "no" many times each day. Be loving but firm, and respond the same way every time he/she violates the rule. They won't learn these important lessons immediately, so expect to repeat these scenes many times before the behavior changes.

When your child does have a temper tantrum, it is important that you try to remain calm yourself. If you have loud, angry outbursts, your child naturally will imitate your behavior. Sometimes gentle restraint, holding, or distraction techniques will work to extinguish the tantrum. If you can't distract your child, ignore them. Every time you react to one of his outbursts in any way, you are rewarding his negative behavior with extra attention. If you are in a public place where his behavior is embarrassing you, simply remove him without discussion or fuss. Wait until he has calmed down before you return or continue with your activities.

Don't use physical punishment to discipline your child such as spanking. If you do, they may assume that aggression is an acceptable way to respond when they don't get their own way. Time-out is a form of discipline used to interrupt unacceptable behavior by removing your child from the scene to a boring place for a brief period of time. Time-out has the advantage of providing a cooling off period for both the child and the parent. Time-out should last about 1 minute per year of age. Do not threaten with "time-out", just do it. The use of a kitchen timer with a "buzzer" can represent an endpoint. Use of the time-out technique needs to be consistent with all care givers. With simple guidelines and reinforcement, your child will begin to sense what is acceptable, and what is not. Praise him every time he plays well with another child, or whenever he feeds or dresses himself, or follows simple directions. As you do, he'll start to feel good about these accomplishments and himself, and his self-esteem will rise. Avoid using food and candy as reward.

SAFETY

Accidents are the leading cause of death in the United States in children 1 to 19 years of age. Car accidents and drowning are the most common causes. Safety measures in your house and outdoors cannot be emphasized enough. Your child's natural curiosity will drive them to explore many new things including some dangerous places. Their self-control and ability to rescue him/her are not yet fully developed so they still need careful supervision. Supervise your child closely when they are playing in the driveway or near the street.

Motor vehicle safety remains critical and is still the greatest risk to your child's health. Georgia law requires booster seats up until age 8; the AAP recommends booster seats until your child is 4 feet 9 inches tall. Children should sit in the backseat. (www.gahighwaysafety.org) and (www.nhtsa.gov/safety/cps).

Post the **Poison Control Number (404) 616-9000** by your phone. In case your child ingests medication or any other poisonous substance, always call poison control first for instructions.

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 2 1/2 years of age.

Additional Resource for Parents

Visit our web site at www.northfultonpediatrics.com

Guide to Potty Training by the American Academy of Pediatrics

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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