

TODDLER

18 Month Toddler Food Chart: Meals, Portions & Daily Schedule

Complete 18-month toddler food chart with safe foods, portion sizes, daily schedule, and nutrition priorities. Reviewed against AAP and CDC feeding guidelines.

Key Takeaways

- At 18 months, toddlers need 3 meals and 2 snacks per day providing approximately 1,000–1,100 calories.
- Portions are approximately 2 tablespoons of each food per serving at 18 months.
- Whole milk continues at 16–24 oz per day until age 2; then switch to low-fat milk.
- Food neophobia peaks around 18–20 months — continue offering variety without pressure.
- Most 18-month-olds can eat all family foods with minor modifications: smaller cuts, softer cooking, less salt.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should an 18-month-old eat in a day?

An 18-month-old should eat approximately 1,000–1,100 calories per day across 3 meals and 2 snacks. Each main meal should include a protein (egg, meat, fish, or legume), a vegetable, a grain, and dairy (milk or yogurt/cheese). Snacks should be nutrient-dense: fruit + dairy or protein + grain.

How much milk should an 18-month-old drink?

16–24 oz of whole milk per day. Do not exceed 24 oz as excess milk displaces iron-rich solid foods and is the primary driver of toddler iron deficiency. Offer milk at meals — not as a between-meal drink. After age 2, switch to low-fat milk.

Can an 18-month-old eat raw fruit and vegetables?

Soft raw fruits (ripe banana, quartered grapes, avocado, very ripe peach) are safe at 18 months. Hard raw vegetables (carrot, apple, celery) remain choking risks until around 24–30 months when all molars are present. Steam, roast, or grate hard vegetables until age 2–3.

What are good iron-rich foods for an 18-month-old?

Best iron-rich foods for 18-month-olds: iron-fortified oatmeal or cereal, minced or shredded red meat (beef, lamb), canned sardines or salmon, scrambled or hard-boiled egg, soft-cooked lentils and chickpeas, tofu, and quinoa. Always pair plant-based iron with a vitamin C source.

How do I handle food rejection at 18 months?

Stay calm and neutral. Remove the plate after 20–30 minutes without comment. Offer the rejected food again at the next meal — track this as an exposure count (toddlers need 8–15 exposures before acceptance). Never force, bribe, or make a separate meal. The picky phase is temporary and resolves with consistent, pressure-free exposure.

What textures should an 18-month-old be eating?

At 18 months, toddlers should be eating most family food textures: soft-cooked vegetables, chopped or shredded meat, cooked legumes, soft bread, pasta, and rice. Avoid hard raw vegetables, whole nuts, and tough chewy meats. All round foods must still be quartered. Most foods should be soft enough to compress between thumb and finger.

Sources

1. Feeding Toddlers Age 12–24 Months — CDC
2. Sample Menu for a One-Year-Old — HealthyChildren.org — AAP
3. Iron Deficiency in Toddlers — CDC
4. Dietary Guidelines 2020–2025 — USDA
5. Choking Prevention for Children — AAP