

## TODDLER

# Toddler Food Texture Progression Chart: Purees to Family Foods (12–36 Months)

Complete toddler food texture progression chart from 12–36 months. Texture stages, signs of readiness, problem-solving texture refusal, and sample foods at each stage.

## Key Takeaways

- By 12 months, toddlers should be eating primarily lumpy mashed foods and soft finger foods — not smooth purees.
- Full primary molars arrive between 24–30 months, enabling true rotary chewing of harder foods for the first time.
- Texture progression stages: smooth puree ' lumpy mash ' soft mashed pieces ' soft finger foods ' chopped family food ' family table food.
- Gagging is normal during all texture transitions — it is the oral motor system learning to manage new textures.
- Persistent texture aversion beyond 18 months in all food categories warrants professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or occupational therapist.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What texture should a 12-month-old be eating?

By 12 months, the texture goal is soft, mashed lumps and soft finger foods — not smooth purees. A 12-month-old should be managing soft-cooked vegetables as finger foods, fork-mashed proteins, and foods that require minimal chewing. If still on smooth purees at 12 months, begin introducing texture immediately.

### When can toddlers eat raw vegetables?

Safely raw vegetables begin around 18–24 months for very soft options (cucumber, avocado) and 24–36 months for firmer options when very thinly grated or sliced (carrots). Hard raw carrot sticks remain a choking hazard until age 4. Most vegetables should still be cooked soft at 24 months — raw options are an addition, not a replacement.

### My toddler only eats mushy food at 18 months — what do I do?

Start by introducing tiny, barely perceptible lumps into accepted smooth foods (mash with a fork rather than blending, leave a few small soft pieces). Introduce finger foods of the same food the toddler accepts in smooth

form. Consistently offer, without pressure. If texture aversion is severe and applies to all foods at 18+ months, seek a pediatric feeding evaluation.

### **When can toddlers eat raw fruit?**

Soft raw fruits (ripe banana, soft pear, ripe melon, ripe mango) are appropriate from 6–12 months in safe sizes. Firmer raw fruits (apple, raw pear) require preparation modifications: very thin slices (no sticks) from 18–24 months, quartered at minimum for all round fruits until age 4. Always match the firmness of the fruit to your toddler's chewing capacity.

### **What is oral motor development and why does it affect texture?**

Oral motor development refers to the coordination and strength of the muscles of the mouth, jaw, tongue, and cheeks involved in chewing and swallowing. Toddlers develop the rotary chewing motion (moving food side-to-side between molars) only when their first primary molars arrive at 12–18 months. Before molars, toddlers mash food on gum pads — which limits the textures they can safely manage.

### **When do toddlers get their molars?**

First primary molars typically arrive between 13–19 months. Second primary molars (completing the full molar set) arrive between 25–33 months. Before the first molars, toddlers cannot perform true lateral chewing. Before the second molars, they cannot efficiently chew tough or hard foods. This is why texture targets are tied to age ranges, not just developmental milestones.

## **Sources**

1. Texture and Food Acceptance in Infants and Toddlers — Nutrients Journal — NIH
2. Responsive Feeding — World Health Organization
3. Feeding Difficulties in Young Children — American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
4. Oral Motor Development — American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
5. Pediatric Feeding Disorders — Pediatric Feeding News