

## TODDLER

# Toddler Meal Prep Guide: Batch Cook a Whole Week in 2 Hours

Complete toddler meal prep guide for ages 12–36 months. Batch cooking schedule, storage guide, freezer meals, and recipes to cook a full week of toddler food in one session.

## Key Takeaways

- A 2-hour batch cook session on the weekend can provide the bulk of a toddler's food for the entire week.
- Prioritise batch-cooking proteins (shredded chicken, lentils, minced beef) and grains (rice, oatmeal, pasta) — vegetables can be prepared fresh more quickly.
- Most cooked toddler food stores for 3–4 days in the fridge and 3 months in the freezer.
- The freezer is your emergency supply: always keep a batch of lentil soup, bolognese, and salmon patties frozen.
- Label everything with content and date — food waste from unlabelled mystery containers is the biggest barrier to sustained meal prep.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I meal prep for a toddler?

Batch cook the three pillars: protein (shredded chicken, minced beef, or lentils), grain (a big batch of rice or oatmeal), and vegetables (steam a large batch to reheat throughout the week). Store in labelled containers in the fridge (3–4 days) or freezer (3 months). Mix and match across the week into different meals without starting from scratch each day.

### What foods can I batch cook for a toddler?

Best batch-cook foods for toddlers: shredded chicken or turkey (reheats in any dish), red lentil dhal (freezes well), minced beef or lamb bolognese (multipurpose, freezes well), cooked rice (use within 24 hours refrigerated), soft-cooked oatmeal (reheat with milk), roasted root vegetables (reheat within 3 days), hard-boiled eggs (5-day fridge life), soft pasta (use within 2 days).

### How long does cooked toddler food last in the fridge?

Cooked meat and fish: 3–4 days. Cooked rice: 24 hours (refrigerate immediately after cooking, reheat thoroughly).  
Cooked pasta: 3–5 days (store without sauce). Cooked legumes: 4–5 days. Cooked vegetables: 3–4 days.  
Hard-boiled eggs (in shell): up to 1 week. Sauces and soups: 4–5 days.

### **Can I freeze cooked toddler food?**

Yes — and it's one of the most effective time-saving strategies for families. Most cooked toddler foods freeze well for up to 3 months: bolognese and meat sauces, lentil and bean soups, shredded chicken in broth, fruit purees, and pancakes. Do not freeze cooked rice (food safety risk — if you must freeze rice, cool rapidly and consume within 1 month with thorough reheating). Do not freeze cooked pasta (texture degrades).

### **What equipment do I need for toddler meal prep?**

Essential: a large stockpot, a baking sheet or two, a food processor or blender (for sauces), and a set of airtight containers in various sizes. Helpful: a slow cooker or Instant Pot (great for hands-off protein cooking), silicone baby food freezer trays (for portioning), and a label maker or masking tape + marker.

### **How do I reheat toddler food safely?**

Reheat food to internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) — piping hot throughout. For refrigerated food, microwave in 30-second bursts and stir between bursts to distribute heat evenly. Test the temperature before serving and allow food to cool to a safe eating temperature. Never reheat food more than once.

## **Sources**

1. Food Safety for Families With Young Children — FDA
2. Safe Storage Times for Cooked Foods — FoodSafety.gov
3. Toddler Nutrition — CDC
4. Meal Planning for Families — USDA MyPlate
5. Reheating Food Safely — NHS