

TODDLER

Toddler Meal Plan 18–24 Months: Full Week of Easy Family Meals

Complete 7-day toddler meal plan for ages 18–24 months. Simple family-friendly recipes, iron-rich meals, portion guidance, and tips for managing the picky eating peak.

Key Takeaways

- 18–24 months is the peak of food neophobia — keep offering variety without pressure and expect rejection of familiar foods.
- Each meal in this plan includes one accepted food alongside new or less-preferred foods to reduce mealtime anxiety.
- Whole milk continues at 16–24 oz per day; transition to low-fat milk begins at 24 months.
- Self-feeding with a spoon should be the primary method at every meal — offer preloaded spoons but let toddlers take the lead.
- All meals below are family-friendly: cook once for everyone, modify texture/size for your toddler.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should an 18-month-old be eating?

An 18-month-old can eat most family foods modified to safe sizes. They need 3 meals and 2 snacks per day providing about 1,000–1,100 calories. Their diet should include protein (meat, eggs, legumes), dairy (16–24 oz whole milk plus yogurt or cheese), grains (preferably whole grain), vegetables, and fruit at every meal. Iron-rich foods should appear at every main meal.

How do I handle extreme pickiness at 18 months?

18 months is peak food neophobia. Keep offering variety alongside one accepted food at every meal. Never force, bribe, or make a separate meal. Track exposures — toddlers need 8–15 before accepting. The pickiness is temporary; research shows most toddlers broaden their palate by age 4–5 with consistent exposure.

Can an 18-month-old eat everything the family eats?

Almost everything, with modifications: cut meat into small pieces, quarter round fruits, cook vegetables until soft (carrots, green beans), and avoid whole nuts, popcorn, and excessive salt and sugar. Most casseroles, pasta dishes, soups, and rice dishes work perfectly for 18-month-olds with minor size adjustments.

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

Offer water freely throughout the day — at meals and between them. Toddlers aged 1–3 need approximately 1.3 litres (44 oz) of total fluid per day, with much of this coming from milk and water in food. Offer water in a sippy cup or open cup at every meal and have it available throughout the day.

What snacks work best for an 18-month-old?

Best snacks for 18-month-olds combine a protein or fat with a fruit or vegetable: yogurt and fruit, cheese and crackers, hummus with soft vegetable sticks, nut butter on toast, avocado on rice cakes. Avoid snack foods high in sugar and salt, and avoid continuous snacking — offer snacks at set times only.

Should I be worried if my 18-month-old stopped eating a food they used to like?

No. Food jag rejection — suddenly refusing a previously accepted food — is completely normal at this age. Continue offering the rejected food at regular intervals. Most food jag rejections are temporary. If a toddler rejects everything they previously ate simultaneously, mention it at the next pediatrician visit.

Sources

1. Sample Menu for a One-Year-Old — HealthyChildren.org — AAP
2. Toddler Nutrition: 12–24 Months — CDC
3. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025 — USDA
4. Division of Responsibility in Feeding — Ellyn Satter Institute
5. Picky Eating and Food Neophobia in Toddlers — Nutrients — NIH