

Key strategies for healthcare providers to promote a healthy toddler diet

- Discuss common nutritional challenges in toddlers with parents/caregivers.
- Use family-focused approaches when encouraging healthy eating habits:
 - Eat meals together at the table
 - Make healthy eating a habit for all family members
 - Eliminate television during mealtime
- Explain that it is the parent/caregiver's responsibility to make healthy food purchasing decisions and provide the toddler with a healthy diet.
- Discuss food safety with the parent, encouraging caregivers to cut foods into small pieces, have children sit down while eating, and avoid foods that pose a high risk for choking (foods shaped in a small, cylindrical shape that is hard, slippery, or crunchy).
- Routinely chart height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) on recommended growth charts and discuss dietary habits with caregivers.
- Perform recommended screenings for iron deficiency anemia.
- Outline specific dietary guidelines for prevention of iron deficiency anemia, recommending foods rich in iron and no more than 24 oz of milk per day (AAP guidelines).
- Advise parents to read food labels carefully when selecting food for toddlers, avoiding foods that have added sugars or are high in sodium.
- Discourage caregivers from pressuring or coercing toddlers to eat.
- Provide specific interventions for overweight and obese toddlers, such as eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages, monitoring portion sizes, increasing fruit and vegetable intake, and limiting screen time to less than 2 hours/day.