

You Can Use A Tablespoon To Measure the Amount of Food Your Toddler Needs

- Is she eating enough vegetables? Here's a measuring tip that can guide you.

by [Kitty Espiritu-Ricafort](#) . 22 hours ago

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- One of the challenges parents face on a daily basis involves mealtime. Many moms and dads often end up frustrated, doing every trick in the book just to get their toddlers to finish the food on their plates.

A nibble of pandesal in the morning, three spoonfuls of tinola for lunch, a few bites of chicken with rice at night, and a sippy cup of milk before bedtime - these complete what a finicky toddler consumes to get her through the day. Like all parents, you might be wondering and worrying if your little one is getting enough food and nutrients.

How much food should a toddler eat

You can use a tablespoon as a guide in measuring the food a toddler needs every day. For example, you can feed a two-year-old, two tablespoons of grains, two tablespoons of veggies, and so on. If you are unsure, you can always consult your doctor for advice.

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Note and expect changes in her appetite

When your baby turns one, expect her appetite to slow down as her [growth rate decreases](#); but as appetite decreases, the quest for more control and independence seem to be all the fuel she needs to rev up her little physical engine. But, don't worry moms and dads, your baby is growing up and is discovering that the world is within arm's reach and mealtimes are just in the way of her next exciting adventure!

While it seems impossible to get your little explorer to sit still, aim to get at least five mini-meals in her tummy (three major ones and two to three minor ones in the form of healthy snacks) per day — covering [between 1,000 to 1,400 calories](#) of her daily nutritional requirements. Mission impossible? Thankfully, it's

quite possible.

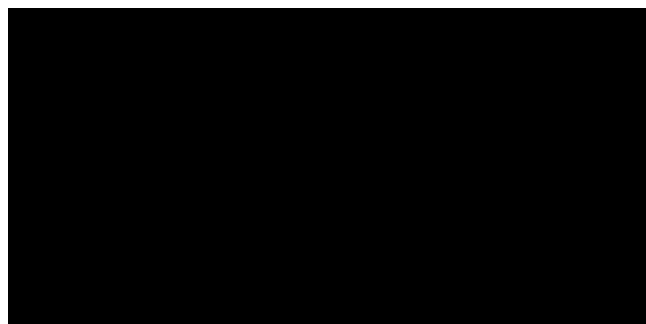
Start small and take it from there

If you're not into the [tech side of calculating](#) and scientific terminologies (think calories, [servings](#), percentages) may seem intimidating and complicated, you can keep things simple with the help of this [measuring tip](#) as an option. Keep in mind that this is just a conservative estimate and not to be used as a standard.

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Use a tablespoon for every year of your baby's age (1 tablespoon = one-year-old, 2 tablespoons = two-years-old, and so on) for each of the [five food groups](#) (grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy and protein).

For example, for a two-year-old, try to feed her two tablespoons of grain (like two tablespoons of oatmeal or half a slice of bread, etc.), two tablespoons of vegetables, and two tablespoons of fruit per day.

With the dairy category, aside from two tablespoons of cheese or the like, toddlers also require [16 ounces](#) of milk (or less if combined with another calcium-building food item) per day.

Still too complicated? You can take your cue from the pros and consider this sample menu from Healthy Children as a starting point:

Note: This menu is planned for a two-year-old child who weighs approximately 27 pounds (12.5 kg).

1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons (15 mL)

1 tablespoon = 1/2 ounce (15 mL)

1 cup = 8 ounces (240 mL), 1 ounce = 30 mL

Breakfast

- 1/2 cup nonfat or low- fat milk
- 1/2 cup iron- fortified cereal or 1 egg
- 1/3 cup fruit (for example, banana, cantaloupe, or strawberries)
- 1/2 slice whole wheat toast
- 1/2 teaspoon margarine or butter or 1 teaspoon jelly

Snack

- 4 crackers with cheese or hummus or 1/2 cup cut-up fruit or berries
- 1/2 cup water

Lunch

- 1/2 cup low- fat or nonfat milk
- 1/2 sandwich—1 slice whole wheat bread, 1 ounce meat, slice of cheese, veggie (avocado, lettuce, or tomato)
- 2–3 carrot sticks (cut up) or 2 tablespoons other dark- yellow or dark-green vegetable
- 1/2 cup berries or 1 small (1/2 ounce) low-fat oatmeal cookie

Snack

- 1/2 cup nonfat or low-fat milk
- 1/2 apple (sliced), 3 prunes, 1/3 cup grapes (cut up), or 1/2 orange
- 1/2 cup nonfat or low-fat milk
- 2 ounces meat
- 1/3 cup pasta, rice, or potato
- 2 tablespoons vegetable

Try as we might, accept the fact that there will be good days and not-so-good days, and it's okay. Plan long-term, gauge on a weekly rather than a daily basis and you might be surprised that your little one has been fulfilling the expected servings — but from a weekly standpoint (some days she could be eating more grain or dairy and on others more vegetables and protein, but overall, checking all the

nutritional boxes).

According to [Healthy Children.Org](https://www.healthychildren.org), "Toddlers and preschoolers grow in spurts and their appetites come and go in spurts, so they may eat a whole lot one day and then hardly anything the next. It's normal, and as long as you offer them a healthy selection, they will get what they need."

Avoid force-feeding and choose your battles

Force-feeding, threatening, and making mealtimes a battle of wills can only make eating a negative experience and a chore to do. If five good, nutritious mini-meals are the goal, don't sabotage your efforts by filling them up with [drinks and/or empty caloric food](#) and expecting the little one to still have space for the good stuff.

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What about juice? Is it good for toddlers? Elizabeth M. Ward, MS, RD shares that, “children do not need juice. The AAP recommends limiting fruit juice intake to 6 ounces a day or less until 6 years of age. It's better to get your child accustomed to the taste of water than juice at a young age," Altman explains.

“It's not that fruit juice is bad. It's an important source of several vitamins and minerals that fuel growth, including vitamin C. Fortified juices offer additional nutrients, such as calcium and vitamin D, too. The problem is, drinking [fruit] juice, even when it's diluted, may give kids a taste for sweets...whole fruit is [better] for toddlers,” pediatrician Tanya Remer Altman, MD adds.

Make mealtime fun

Making their meals interactive and fun also help make the dishes appear more appetizing. Try banana

eyes or ears on pancakes, call them broccoli “trees” and pretend she’s a giant, or involve her in prepping her meal by letting her add cheese to her pasta — the possibilities are endless for a fun-filled mealtime experience. Have fun and be creative!

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Lastly, don't be discouraged when they only seem to want the same food over and over. The time will come when they would want a change in the menu and will be open to trying a new taste. Apparently, it can take up to [15 tries](#) of rejecting a type of food (usually vegetables) before one day, she suddenly changes his mind.

Keep your chin up and bring out your spoon — this could be sweet, magic 15.

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