

[Join now to personalize](#)

babycenter.

LOG IN



We have updated our Terms of Use and encourage you to read them by [clicking here](#).



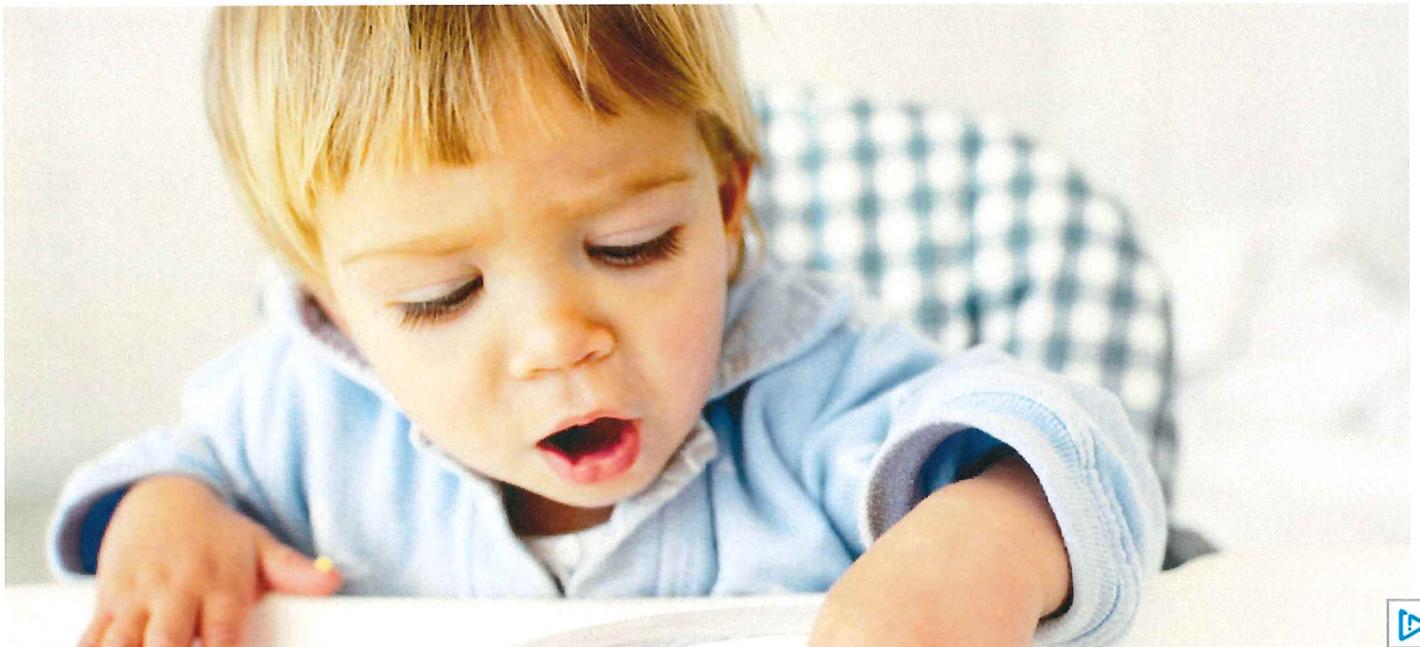
Toddler > Feeding

Foods that can be unsafe for your child



By Karen Miles | Medically reviewed by Erin Hinga, M.S., R.D., registered dietitian | Jan 11, 2021

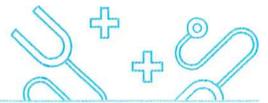
Unless your child has a known food allergy, very few foods are off the table when it comes to eating. For your child's health, don't offer low-fat milk or any added sugars before age 2. After age 2, limit added sugars to 10 percent of their caloric intake. At all ages, beware of choking hazards. These include foods cut into too-large chunks, big spoonfuls of nut butters, sticky foods, hard foods, seeds, and raw vegetables.



[Join now to personalize](#)

- [Foods to avoid: 24 to 48 months](#) ↓
- [Foods to avoid: 4 to 5 years](#) ↓
- [The latest on children and food allergies](#) ↓

As your child grows, he'll be eager to sample food from your plate – and you'll be eager to add variety to his diet. But not all foods are safe for your child at every age.



Prevent emergencies *before* they happen

Learn how to tell which foods and toys are choking hazards in our CPR, Choking, and First Aid Course

[Learn more](#)

Foods to avoid: 12 to 24 months

Low-fat milk: Most young toddlers need the fat and calories of whole milk for growth and development. Once your child turns 2 (and if she doesn't have any growth problems), you can start giving her lower-fat milk if you like. (If your child is at risk for obesity, however, the doctor may recommend [introducing low-fat milk before age 2.](#))

Added sugars: Children under age 2 should not have added sugar in their diets at all, advise the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services. These are sugars and syrups that are added to foods or beverages when they are processed or prepared. This does not include sugars found in milk and fruits. Too much added sugar in children's diets has been linked to obesity and increased risk for

[Join now](#) to personalize

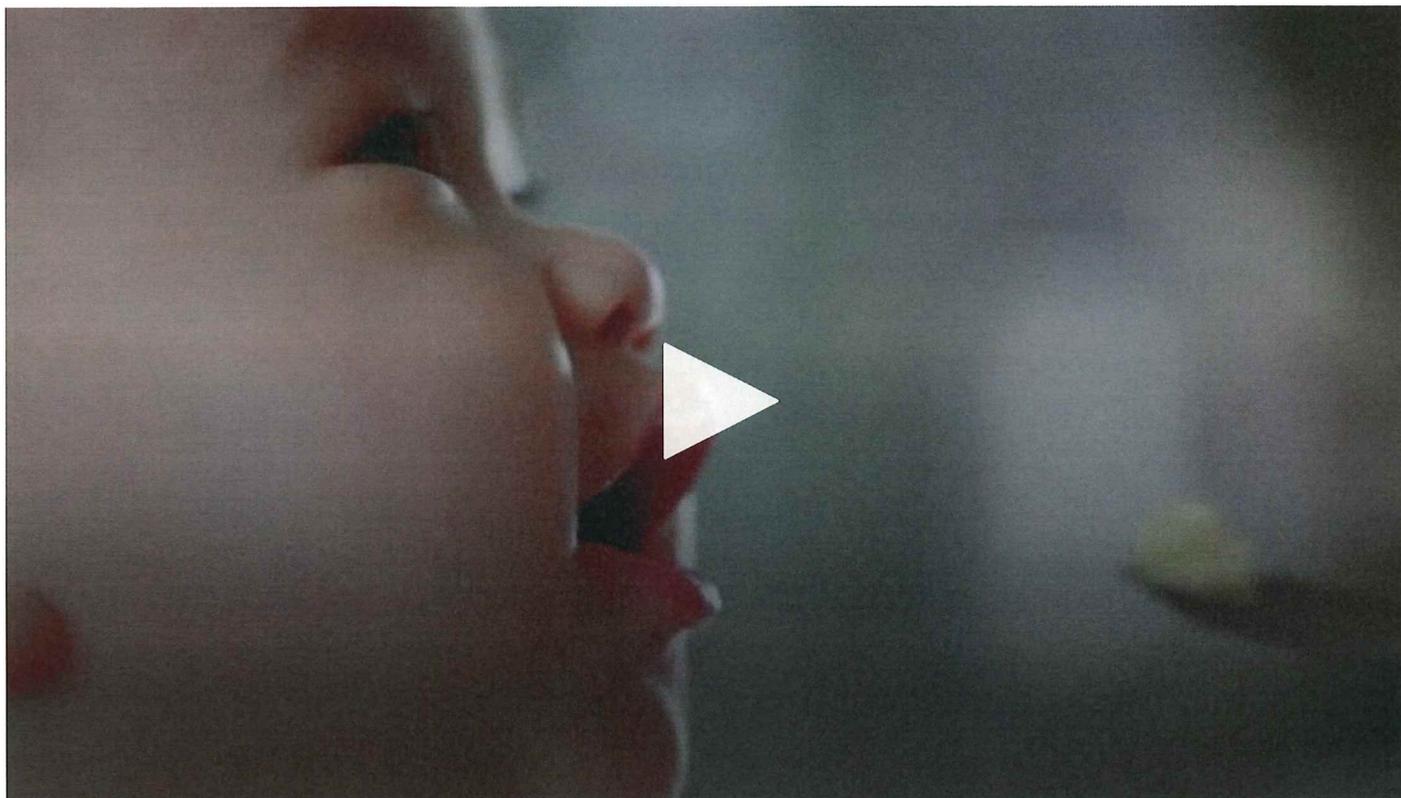
unpasteurized (raw) dairy products. These may contain harmful bacteria and parasites that can lead to serious illness or death.

Too much sodium: Sodium is an essential nutrient primarily consumed as salt. However, too much can be harmful. Children this age should have no more than 1,200 mg of sodium per day, according to the USDA and DHHS. Check the Nutrition Facts label when buying canned, frozen, and packaged foods.

Large chunks: A chunk of food can get stuck in your child's throat. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that you cut food into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch. For example, cut fruits such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, and strawberries into quarters before serving, and shred or finely chop meats, vegetables, and cheeses.

Raw vegetables: To avoid choking hazards, soft-cook vegetables such as carrots, celery, and broccoli, and dice, shred, or cut them into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch before serving.

Feeding timeline: Your child's development



2:15 min



[Join now to personalize](#)



plums, and cherries before serving. And don't feed your child nuts or seeds, such as sunflower or pumpkin seeds. Seeds may be too small to choke on but can get stuck in a child's airway and cause an infection.

Hard or crunchy foods: Nuts, popcorn, and pretzels are all choking hazards, as are all hard candies and cough drops.

Advertisement | page continues below

Sticky foods: Chewing gum and sticky foods – such as jelly or gummy candies, dried fruit, and marshmallows – can get lodged in your child's throat. Stringy, melted cheese that's not cut up also can be a choking hazard.

Nut butters: Dollops of [peanut butter](#) and other nut butters, which can be difficult to swallow, are a choking hazard. Don't serve them on a spoon. Spread nut butter thinly on bread or crackers, or thin it with water, applesauce, or yogurt.

Learn more about [preventing choking in young children](#) and choosing [safe finger foods](#).

Foods to avoid: 24 to 48 months

[Join now to personalize](#)

Unpasteurized foods: Children should never have unpasteurized juice or cider or unpasteurized (raw) dairy products. These may contain harmful bacteria and parasites that can lead to serious illness or death.

Too much sodium: Nutritional guidelines recommend that children ages 2 to 3 consume no more than 1,200 mg of sodium per day. That increases to 1,500 mg of sodium per day for 4-year-olds. Check the Nutrition Facts label when buying canned, frozen, and packaged foods.

Choking hazards: Even though your child is becoming a more competent eater, there's still a chance he'll choke on his food. Continue to avoid the choking hazards listed above, and discourage your child from walking, talking, watching television, lying down, or doing anything else while eating that might distract him from his meal.

Foods to avoid: 4 to 5 years

Too much added sugar: Nutritional guidelines recommend that everyone over the age of 2 get no more than 10 percent of their calories from added sugars. Check the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods, and avoid those that list "Added Sugars" as much as possible. Continue to limit sugary treats and watch out for added sugars in foods such as yogurt, cereal, granola bars, and juice.

Unpasteurized foods: Children should never have unpasteurized juice or cider or unpasteurized (raw) dairy products. These may contain harmful bacteria and parasites that can lead to serious illness or death.

Too much sodium: Nutritional guidelines recommend that children in this age group consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. Check the Nutrition Facts label when buying canned, frozen, and packaged foods.

Choking hazards: Your child is a competent eater now, but you still need to be on the lookout for food she could choke on. Also minimize distractions while she's eating.

The latest on children and food allergies



[Join now to personalize](#)



introducing the top allergenic foods, which include eggs, milk, peanuts, wheat, soy, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.

[Read more about food allergies in kids.](#)

Was this article helpful?



Yes



No

Age-by-age guide to feeding your toddler

By Karisa Ding



When your child can ride in a forward-facing car seat

By Karen Miles



Your 13-month-old's physical development: New freedom to explore

By Linda Murray



How to help your toddler manage big feelings

By Darienne Hosley Stewart



pregnant woman touching belly

Follow your baby's amazing development

TRACK MY BABY



[Join now to personalize](#) 

information in the world. When creating and updating content, we rely on credible sources: respected health organizations, professional groups of doctors and other experts, and published studies in peer-reviewed journals. We believe you should always know the source of the information you're seeing. Learn more about our [editorial and medical review policies](#).

[Show more](#) 



Karen Miles

Karen Miles is a writer and an expert on pregnancy and parenting who has contributed to BabyCenter for more than 20 years. She's passionate about bringing up-to-date, useful information to parents so they can make good decisions for their families. Her favorite gig of all is being "Mama Karen" to four grown children and "Nana" to nine grandkids.



Advertisement



[Join now to personalize](#)



Toddler milestone: Talking and understanding

Reviewed by Jennifer Burgis, M.D., pediatrician

Feeding problems: Refusing to eat

Reviewed by Lisa Dana, M.D.

Play: Why it's so important

Reviewed by Paul Young, M.D., pediatrician



[Join now to personalize](#)

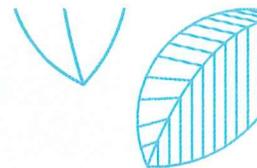


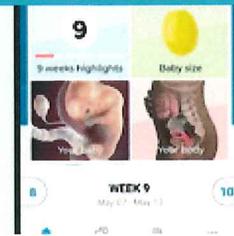
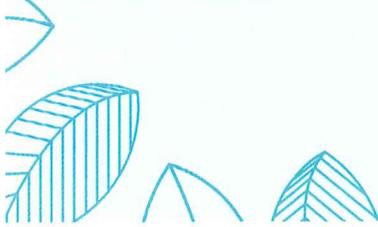
Advertisement

 Search BabyCenter

Get the BabyCenter app

The #1 app for tracking pregnancy and baby growth.



[Join now to personalize](#)**EXPERT
WRITTEN****DOCTOR
APPROVED**

BABYCENTER IS YOUR PARENTING PARTNER.

BabyCenter is committed to providing the most helpful and trustworthy pregnancy and parenting information in the world. Our content is doctor approved and evidence based, and our community is moderated, lively, and welcoming. With thousands of award-winning articles and community groups, you can track your pregnancy and baby's growth, get answers to your toughest questions, and connect with moms, dads, and expectant parents just like you.

ABOUT BABYCENTER

[BabyCenter apps](#)[About us](#)[Awards](#)[Careers](#)[Advertise with us](#)[Press Center](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Terms of Use](#)