

Toddlers' Tall Order

It is amazing how your sweet and cooperative baby can turn into a strong-willed and restless child when he enters toddlerhood. Junior now displays a sense of independence through his many likes and dislikes, including food.

Mothers often complain about their toddlers' fussiness with foods and poor appetite. Compared to the first year of life, a toddler sees a steady but slower growth rate, hence the decrease in appetite and food intake.

Junior's energy requirement escalates by about 50%. He also needs more protein to build muscles, plus calcium for his lengthening bones and growing teeth. His requirements for vitamins and minerals also increase, notably the B vitamins, vitamin E, zinc and selenium. Junior also needs 100% more folic acid for his expanding blood volume.

Food refusal

When young children are hungry, they will readily let you know. So, food refusal usually comes with sound reasons. Is your child too active or inactive to make him hungry? Could he be using food refusal to gain attention? Is it teething discomfort? Recognizing the cause will help you rectify the situation without turning mealtimes into wartime.

Knowing that toddlers have smaller stomachs and appetites, mothers should avoid force-feeding. Keep food servings small but make sure they are nutritious, packed with energy and easy to eat. Young children prefer simple, uncomplicated foods. A good choice that fits this tall order is rice porridge.

Rice is nice

Rice is bursting with energy to fuel Junior's countless activities and high metabolic rate. Rice is also the least allergenic food and it supplies a little protein, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorus, other minerals and fibre. It makes an excellent base to which foods like chicken, meat, fish and vegetables can be added.

Alternatively, mothers can use commercially-prepared rice porridge which take only a few minutes to cook. Every serving of Nestle rice porridge comes with the goodness of 15 vitamins and minerals. Variants such as Fish or Vegetables are available to introduce a variety of taste and textures to the child.



ZINC

PROTEIN

CALCIUM

VITAMINS

The picky eater

It's normal for toddlers to form personal preferences and boycott certain foods, especially vegetables and meat. Respecting his individuality will help him in his emotional development. Instead of waging a food battle against your child, capture his interest with appealing foods.

Serve him foods of different colours and textures, cut into interesting shapes or create interesting stories about the food. Use small, colourful cups and bowls that he can handle confidently. Toddlers eat more willingly and happily when they feel in control. Try "hiding" the hated vegetables or fruits by mashing the potatoes and carrots in Junior's soup or blending fruits into smoothies. Mince meat to make it easier to chew.

Feeding toddlers may be challenging but the joy of seeing them grow healthily into the next phase of life is worth the effort.

