

Would my toddler benefit from feeding therapy?

Any items listed below are possible concerns regarding your toddler's overall feeding success (i.e., 16 months to 36 month of age). Please talk with your child's doctor or contact Playabilities directly about any feeding concerns. Early identification is key to having success with your child's feeding development.

Feeding Concerns

Does your child usually like to eat?

Children this age let their parents know that they enjoy eating in many ways. They may ask for food or reach for the cup, spoon, or bowl to put the food into their mouth. Those who feed themselves use both a spoon and their hands for bringing food to their mouth. Many want to be independent and do not like to be fed by someone else. Some parents still prefer to feed their child all of their meals. If they are still being fed by their parents, they will open their mouth and move toward the food to show when they are ready for the next bite of food. If you feel your child does not seem to like to eat, talk with your doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.

Does your child eat more often than every two hours?

Most children this age eat only during the day. If your child asks to be fed every two hours or more often, a few things may be going on. First, it may not be easy for them to take the amount of food that can help them wait longer between meals. Second, they may not be hungry, but enjoys food to calm themselves. Third, they may just eat more often and smaller meals because they are more comfortable than if they eat a large amount at once. If you are feeding your child more often than every two hours, talk to your child's doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.

Does your child let you know when they are hungry?

Children this age show that they are hungry in many ways. They may still fuss as they did when they were younger. But, they also use hand, eye, and body movements that are easy to understand. For example, they take adults to the refrigerator and point to the food they want. They also reach for the water faucet or try to climb in their high chair if they have one. Some ask for what they want. If you feel that your child does not let you know that they are hungry, or if you have to initiate feeding your child all the time, talk to your child's doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.



Do you think your child eats enough?

Children age 24 months to 36 months old typically eat 3 meals and 2 to 3 snacks per day. It is important that they do not exceed 24 ounces (720 mls) of milk. If they drink a lot of milk, often they will not eat enough food to meet their nutrition needs. At this age, they often eat different amounts of food depending on how hungry they are at mealtime. Your child should eat some food(s) from each food group every day. If your child is growing well, then typically they are eating enough. If your child is often only eating small amounts and is not growing well, talk to your child's doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.

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Feeding should be a fun and happy experience for both you and your child. If your child is often doing any of the items listed below, talk with their doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.

- Gets upset when their face is touched at the start of the feeding
- Refuses to eat
- Does not chew
- Does not swallow
- Turns away from the breast or bottle or cup
- Arches their body
- Chokes
- Gags
- Cries
- Makes loud breathing noises
- Turns blue
- Becomes limp or worn out before the end of feedings
- Falls asleep before the end of feeding
- Vomits after eating
- Pushes away food
- Puts hand in front of face
- Tantrums



Do you enjoy meal times with your child?

Most toddlers and their parents enjoy their meals together. Once in a while, toddlers have tantrums during a meal or are fussy, but, when you interact with your toddler and they are able to eat without difficulty, you two should enjoy your meal time together. Yet, some children do not enjoy mealtimes (i.e., they do not show interest in food, often take only a few bites at each meal, and/or appear upset by food). When children do not enjoy meals and have trouble eating, it can cause a lot of stress for the parent.

Does your child sit up to eat?

Children this age can sit upright to eat. Sitting up well makes it easier for your child to eat. If your child cannot sit for an entire feeding, or they cannot sit upright on their own, they may benefit from skilled feeding therapy.

Does your child eat foods that have different food flavors?

Many children this age eat a variety of foods that have different flavors. They eat from all food groups. This means fruits, vegetables, cereals and bread, meats that are easy to chew, cheeses, yogurts, or dark beans. But, like many adults, children like some flavors more than others. For example, they often like fruits that are sweet more than vegetables that might be bitter. If your child often gags when they try a new food, or, if they will eat only very few foods, they may benefit from skilled feeding therapy. Keep in mind that some children need to have a new food offered up to 10 times before they will eat it. This is because they have to get used to both the way the foods tastes and the way it feels.

Does your child eat a variety of food textures?

Children this age eat a variety of food textures, including crunchy foods, soft foods, lumpy foods, and liquids. They eat from all food groups: fruits & vegetables, grains like cereals, breads, and rice, protein like milk, yogurt, eggs, cheese & meat that is easy to chew. Yet, some children seem to like only a few foods or want to eat the same thing all the time. Some gag or say “no” to foods that have a texture they do not like. If your child only wants to eat 1 or 2 kinds of foods or they often gag on different textures, talk with your child’s doctor to request a referral for skilled feeding therapy.