

Union Avenue Pediatrics

DIET FOR THE 15 MONTH OLD CHILD

Fifteen-month-old children like to be independent. Fingers work well for feeding. They are anxious to try a spoon but often get frustrated by early attempts. A cup usually works well. Postpone the use of a fork until the child is better coordinated and not running the risk of injury. Some children will be sloppy, especially toward the end of the meal, but neatness will steadily improve. When the child is tired, help from a parent is usually accepted with gratitude. Meat should be cut very small. Chicken, fish, meatloaf and hot dogs (sliced and quartered) are good choices because they are easier to eat.

Milk. Around their first birthday children, unless they are milk intolerant, may start drinking whole milk. By 15 months it should be given from a cup at meals, though children this age still like a bottle or the breast before nap or bedtime. Excess milk interferes with the appetite for solids; 16 to 18 ounces a day is enough, and some children prefer less. Children who require a milk substitute may generally be given soy milk (look for fortified soy milk at your grocer or health food store which has added essential fatty acids). Cow's milk protein allergy or intolerance is usually self-limiting and ceases to be a problem after 18-24 months. You may wish to discuss a cow's milk trial with your pediatrician if you believe your child may have had an intolerance or allergy.

Juice may be used as an occasional substitute for breakfast fruit. We do not recommend juice at this age for between meals drinking. Children by this age should learn to drink water when thirsty. Sixteen to 18 ounces of juice per week is enough. Do not get children in the habit of having Koolaid, sweetened fruit drinks or

soda pop at this age.

Foods. Vegetables are the most important part of the diet. Usually it is best to give less fruit than vegetables. Meat, eggs or fish can be given once or twice every day. Some children will go through a period of disliking red meats, but they may do well on fish and chicken or turkey. Potatoes, rice, bread, cereal and other starches are important, but avoid sugared cereals and sweetened breads. Postpone spicy and fried foods. Desserts, except for fruit, are not needed every day. Animal crackers, ice cream or oatmeal cookies are good choices when desserts are to be offered. If children have trouble eating vegetables or meat, you may wish to postpone serving the milk, fruit or dessert until you see how much of the first part of the meal is eaten.

Schedules. Three meals a day are enough at this age. We recommend between meal snacks only if a regular meal will be very late. Bedtime snacks can be discontinued at this age.

Doing it right and making it fun. Meal time should be pleasant and relaxed, and it should be at a regularly scheduled time. A 5 to 10 minute quiet time before meals will help you and your child. Choose short handled spoons and "tippy cups" to minimize spills. Sometimes a child can use a spoon more easily at this age if the handle is bent. Finger foods are a great help. Children like a variety of foods, so allow them to experiment. They will always want a little of each item on your plate, so be prepared to share a little!