

Family meals for a toddler

Family mealtimes can be a lovely way to bring everyone together - in theory. Throw a toddler into the mix and your family feast can turn into a food fight in the blink of an eye. Here are some family meal ideas with toddlers to keep dinnertime a drama-free zone.

- ✧ Toddlers are little mimics and you are their idol, so show them how it's done.
- ✧ Try giving them smaller portions on (unbreakable) plates.
- ✧ Ignore silly behaviour (throwing food around, shouting, banging on the table).
- ✧ Praise good behaviour (eating, enjoying, trying to use spoons and forks).
- ✧ Talk to them about the meal, its taste, colours, smells and textures.
- ✧ Don't focus all your attention on them - it's a family meal after all.
- ✧ Don't worry if they don't clear their plate.
- ✧ Don't offer alternatives if they refuse what's on the table.
- ✧ If eating out, take some of their favourite things to keep them busy until the food arrives. Books, a favourite toy or colouring work well.
- ✧ Make sure the restaurant is child-friendly with highchairs, child-sized meals and child-friendly plates and cutlery.
- ✧ If they have a tantrum in a restaurant or café try taking them outside or to a quiet corner for a moment. They could just be overwhelmed by the sights, sounds and smells of a busy environment.