

## IPARENTING

### LOW CARBS AND TODDLERS

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Ugh....a nutrition expert's nightmare! Toddlers and low carbs—they do not go together under any circumstances. The most important information parents need to arm themselves with is that toddlers are in the midst of a major growth spurt—especially brain growth; they need protein, AND THEY REQUIRE CARBOHYDRATES—not just for energy and fuel, as we adults need, but also for brain energy....there is not adequate brain fuel if there is not adequate carbs included in a toddler's program.

It is OK for the adults to LIMIT (also not completely avoid) carbs. Toddlers, or any children for that matter, are NOT mini-adults. They cannot be fed like them either.

We don't necessarily have to prepare different meals for toddlers, they certainly should eat the same food groups that we adults do—protein, complex whole grain starches/carbs, vegetables and fruits—however their portions need to be adjusted for their needs. Therefore, if adults are avoiding potatoes and pasta, yes, we need to prepare those foods for our toddlers at mealtime. Without a doubt!

There are *no* advantages to a toddler being on a low carb diet. In fact, as I said, it can inhibit proper growth and development—one advantage, however, is that low carb eaters (adults) tend to be healthful eaters, for the most part. I do feel that teaching your toddler/child the healthful habits from early on is so very significant—that there are healthy carbs and not-so-healthy ones, that there are healthier fats—and not-so-healthy ones too. There is the concept of moderation that they need to learn. Eating is not black and white.

Interesting you should ask about role modeling—this is the number one cause of poor eating habits among children. A parent should be quite careful as to the choices they make around their children. On the one hand, I do not believe that a parent should sit in their living room with their feet up on their coffee table eating a sleeve of Oreos in front of their children...we don't want to teach that to our kids. And who do they learn most of their habits and patterns from??? Monkey see, monkey do.

A toddler should be introduced to a variety of textures, colors, groups of foods. They should have 3 well balanced meals per day (fruit, protein, starch, vegetable, calcium source) with 2-3 small snacks daily. The rule of thumb: For each year of the child's age, this should be their portion (in tablespoons) for each food group (i.e. a 4 year old—4T of protein or meat or beans; 4T of fruit; 4T of rice or potato or corn; 4T of a vegetable).

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