

# FIRST 'CENSUS' OF ONE-TO-THREES REVEALS THE SECRET LIFE OF BRITISH TODDLERS

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## FIRST 'CENSUS' OF ONE-TO-THREES REVEALS THE SECRET LIFE OF BRITISH TODDLERS

Our "Little One-ders" Are Getting What They Want But Not Always What They Need

British toddlers spend longer staring at a screen each day than they do eating their meals and more time in a car than at a children's playground, according to a first of its kind 'Census' giving a snapshot into the lives of our one to three years olds..

The 'Census' was commissioned by [growingupmilkinfo.com](http://growingupmilkinfo.com), a website for parents seeking information about toddler nutrition and the role of Growing Up Milk within a healthy, balanced diet.

### Busy Social & Cultural Lives

Toddlers are quids-in when it comes to lifestyle, with the average toddler having nearly a four-figure sum spent annually on their activities/classes, almost £180 on toys and boasting a wardrobe of designer clothes. However, even though, "pound for pound", they need more energy and nutrients than their parents, the survey results suggest that toddlers' diets aren't getting the same attention as other aspects of their lives – despite nutrition's important role in helping growth and development. The 'Census' gives some fresh perspective on "the state of the toddler nation's plates", with eight out of ten parents questioned unaware that toddlers have different nutritional needs to the rest of the family.

### Toddlers' diets are 'more burgers than broccoli'

Fast and convenience foods play a significant role in the diet. Typically, today's toddler is more likely to have eaten a burger than broccoli. 60 per cent have been to a fast food restaurant, according to the new figures and the vast majority of toddlers questioned had tried chips (86%), pizza (80%) and chicken nuggets (68%). This echoes previous data from the Infant and Toddler Forum, which revealed 29 per cent of toddlers eat a takeaway once a week and that 81% of toddlers are regularly given ready-made adults foods likely to be high in fat, sugar and salt.

Report co-author Amanda Ursell comments, "This age group is poorly defined, with conflicting data and little attention is paid to toddlers' unique nutritional needs. One to three year olds go through a period of such extraordinary growth and development that we should be thinking of them not just as toddlers but as 'Little One-ders'."

"Although their lifestyles can rival our own, toddlers are not mini-adults. Their bodies, brains and bones are developing at an amazing rate and they need the right nutrition to fuel this," she says.

### A lot on mum's plate

Today's busy lifestyles are also having a clear impact on toddlers' diets. One in 100 parents say they've never cooked a meal for their child and the average mum has just ten recipes she can rotate for lunch and dinner. Favourite meals of the one to three year olds surveyed included spaghetti bolognese, chicken and shepherd's pie but also Chinese takeaway, McDonald's, chips and pizza.

Amanda Ursell comments, "There is little room in the toddler diet for the place of 'empty' calories in the form of sugar and or fat-rich foods, which have little other nutritional goodness."

Six out of ten mums surveyed for the study said they were unaware of the UK Departments of Health recommendation that toddlers should receive a daily supplement containing vitamins A, C and D and responses showed 74% of toddlers are not given these extra vitamins. Uptake of vitamin supplements was reported as lowest in Edinburgh, Newcastle and Sheffield, where the need for vitamin D supplementation is said to be greater than in cities south of Birmingham, due to lower exposure to the UVB sunlight which helps the body produce Vitamin D.

The Census also revealed that, encouragingly, some of today's toddlers have pretty adventurous tastes: 30% of them had tried olives, 30% had tried smoked salmon, 11% had tried sushi, 17% had tried granola and 5% had sampled lobster.

Amanda Ursell concludes, "On the whole, UK toddlers are a lucky lot when you compare them to those living in developing countries because most get enough food and have access to clean water. However, it can come as a surprise that many toddlers here are not getting enough of the essential vitamins and minerals they need for optimum development.

"The good news is that modern developments in toddler nutrition have provided today's parents with convenient and effective ways to ensure their toddlers receive the nutrients they need to help fuel their growth. For instance, 300ml of Growing Up Milk every day alongside a healthy, balanced diet will provide toddlers calcium, iron, vitamins A, C and D, and omega 3 and 6."

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Notes to Editors:

- The Census was based on survey data gathered by Opinion Matters in July 2011 from over 1,000 mums and insight gathered from professionals in the field of toddler nutrition, child psychology, parenting and trends, underpinned with statistics on toddlers from a variety of sources including the National Diet and Nutrition Survey and the Infant and Toddler Forum. Among those involved in authoring the final report were leading nutritionist, journalist, author and mother of two, Amanda Ursell.
- [growingupmilkinfo.com](http://growingupmilkinfo.com) is a resource created by Cow & Gate for parents who want to find out how using

a Growing Up Milk for children aged one to three can support toddler nutrition.

- Growing Up Milk is made from cows' milk, enriched with the key nutrients toddlers need, like vitamins A, C and D, iron, calcium and omega 3 & 6. It is an easy way to give toddlers the extra nutrients that experts say they need to support a healthy balanced diet, in a familiar way.

#### FACTSHEET: "THE AVERAGE BRITISH TODDLER"

"I'm the average British toddler, aged between one and three. I've got a proper name but most people call me bubs or pickles instead. I got off lightly though, some of my friends go by the names of Terminator, Chucky and Monster. Talking of which, I already have ten friends, nearly as many as mummy, but that's no surprise because mummy and daddy think it's most important I learn to socialise.

I have designer labels in my wardrobe including Ralph Lauren and Diesel, as well as high street favourites, especially Gap and Next. Mummy and daddy spend over £160 a year on my clothes, £180 a year on toys for me and nearly £1,000 a year on my favourite activities like soft play, swimming and music classes. Some of my friends even do yoga!

I go on at least one holiday a year and if I've been abroad already, it was probably to Spain, France or America.

Mummy or daddy feed me most of my meals, although sometimes we go out to eat. I've visited a fast food restaurant already, even though I'm not yet 3. I'm quite adventurous in my tastes – I might have tried olives or smoked salmon already – but I don't often eat the 'basics' like fish, tomatoes, leafy green veg and citrus fruit. I eat biscuits, crisps, sweets, chocolates, takeaways and adult ready meals pretty often though! I should have supplements to help me get extra vitamins A, C and D but I don't usually get them because no-one seems to realise I'm meant to.

My typical day sees me spending: 3 hours a day playing at home, 37 minutes playing at friends' houses, 3 hours at nursery, 33 minutes at the playground, 36 minutes at activities/classes (such as soft play, swimming, music), 25 minutes being read to, 26 minutes on messy play, an hour at the shops, half an hour visiting family, 50 minutes travelling by car/public transport, 46 minutes eating and drinking, 63 minutes watching TV or on mummy's computer/ipad and 25 minutes listening to music (I like pop, rock or RNB, by the way).

After such busy days, I go to sleep in my own room. I need to get lots of rest because mummy and daddy hope one day I'll grow up to be a doctor, lawyer or teacher. And they say it's really important I grow up to be happy.

On top of all this, I've got to do a lot of extraordinary growth and development and have very different needs to you adults when it comes to nutrition (although sometimes you grown-ups forget that, if you even realised in the first place!). It doesn't help when sometimes I refuse to eat at mealtimes, which stresses mummy out!