



# INFANT AND TODDLER FEEDING PRACTICES: STATE OF THE SCIENCE AND DAYCARE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES



The Avocado Nutrition Center (ANC) conducted a survey of daycare providers to better understand food purchasing behaviors and barriers to establishing healthier dietary patterns for young children.<sup>1</sup>

Survey findings reveal that **avocados meet daycare center providers' key criteria** for selecting foods that deliver on desired nutrition, health, and well-being benefits, as well as taste and texture attributes.

These findings mirror the Dietary Guidelines for Americans' recommendation to serve nutrient dense foods that allow for easy eating and swallowing and complement a published literature review supporting the role of avocados as an ideal food for complementary and transitional feeding.

Additionally, the data are consistent with previous ANC surveys that demonstrate the importance of nutrition, and specifically vitamins, minerals, protein, and healthy fats, to parents and caregivers when choosing foods for infants and toddlers.

## DAYCARE PROVIDERS CONSIDER NUTRITION, TASTE, AND WELL-BEING AS MOST IMPORTANT WHEN MAKING FEEDING DECISIONS



### Nutrition:



**84%** of daycare providers believe it's important to choose foods that contain vitamins and minerals

**77%** believe it's important for foods to contain unsaturated (good) fats

**70%** think it's important for foods to contain fiber. 86% of daycare providers feel it's important to choose foods that are low in sugar

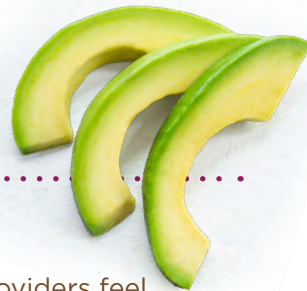
### Taste:



**92%** of daycare providers feel it's important to choose foods that children really enjoy eating

**76%** feel that soft/smooth texture is important

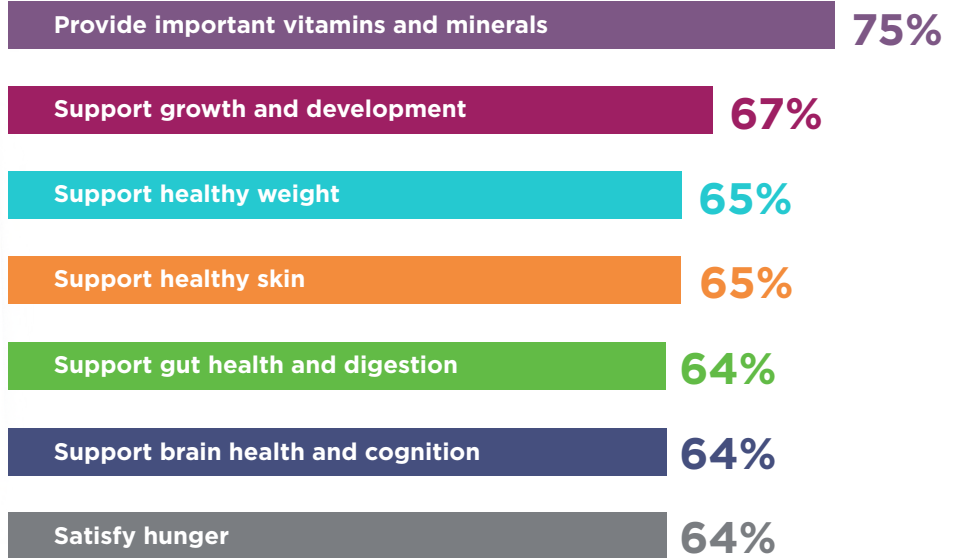
**71%** report mild flavor to be important



Daycare providers say they choose to serve foods and beverages that deliver on health and well-being priorities such as meeting food group recommendations; supporting brain development, physical growth, and development; and satisfying hunger.

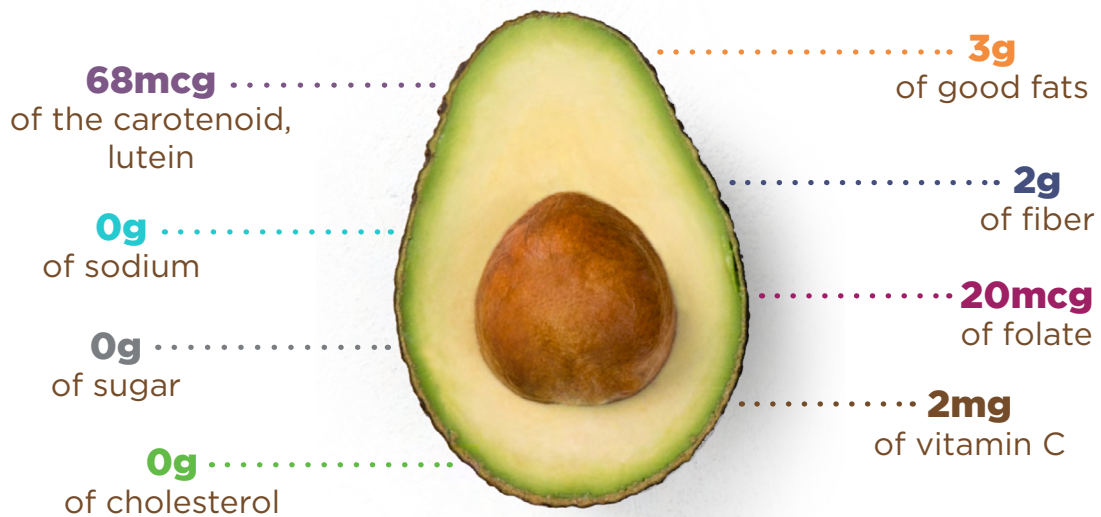


### The majority of providers report being confident that avocados will:



## AVOCADO NUTRITION ALIGNS WITH DAYCARE PROVIDERS' NUTRITION PRIORITIES

Avocados are naturally sodium, sugar, and cholesterol-free, and contribute nearly 20 nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, and phytonutrients to a toddler's diet per 25-gram serving.



## DISCONNECT BETWEEN PRIORITIES, CONFIDENCE, AND PURCHASING OF AVOCADOS

Although avocados align with providers' priorities...



**69%**

of centers never  
serve avocados



**46%**

serve them once  
a month or less



**21%**

serve them at  
least once a week

When served, avocados  
are most frequently  
offered during:



**55%**

Lunch



**36%**

Snack time

Common ways centers prepare avocados for infants and toddlers:



**56%**

as a dip



**44%**

as or in a spread



**39%**

in a smoothie or puree

### References:

1. Infant and Toddler Caregiver Survey of daycare centers responsible for providing at least 3 eating occasions to at least 10 infants or toddlers aged four to 24 months, n= 91, fielded Spring/Summer 2021.
2. Comerford KB, Ayoob KT, Murray RD, Atkinson SA. The Role of Avocados in Complementary and Transitional Feeding. *Nutrients*, 2016, 8, 316. Available at; <http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/8/5/316/htm>

## 48% OF DAYCARE PROVIDERS REPORT NOT SERVING AVOCADOS MORE FREQUENTLY, NOT BECAUSE OF A SPECIFIC REASON, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT “TOP OF MIND.”

They say the following would make it easier to serve avocados to their children:



Simple kid-friendly recipes with avocados

63%



Shelf-stable options (e.g., frozen or vacuum packaged)

40%



Tips on how to select and store ripe avocados

29%



Prepared baby foods that include avocado

28%

## DAYCARE PROVIDERS ARE SEEKING EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE

**62%** said they would be motivated to serve avocados based on a recommendation from an organization they trust (e.g., USDA/CACFP, professional association).

**58%** said they would be motivated by information on the benefits of avocados for child health and development.



*According to a 2016 review paper of more than 100 studies, avocados can play an important role in complementary and transitional feeding.*

- Avocados are nutrient-dense, have a soft texture and a neutral flavor profile, all ideal attributes of a first food.
- Avocados can be introduced as a low-sugar fruit option that can help avoid invoking an early preference for sweet foods.
- Positive early experiences with fruits/veggies are more likely to result in lifelong consumption.
- Avocado dietary bioactive components play an important role in infant health.

**Visit [www.LoveOneToday.com/avocados-babies](http://www.LoveOneToday.com/avocados-babies)**

*for more information on the survey as well as quick and easy baby-friendly recipes that feature avocados.*