

CHOKING PREVENTION FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND CHILDREN



CHOKING PREVENTION MATTERS:

- Choking occurs when food or small objects block the airway
- Lack of oxygen for more than 4 minutes can cause brain damage or death
- Most choking deaths occur in children under 5 years of age; 2/3 occur in infants under 1 year old



Caregivers should be trained in infant and child CPR and the Heimlich maneuver. Knowing what to do in an emergency can save a life.

FOOD-RELATED CHOKING HAZARDS AND PREVENTION TIPS

Common Food Choking Hazards:

- **Round & Firm Foods:** Such as, hot dogs, sausages, meat/cheese cubes, hard candies including jelly beans, and raw vegetables and fruit chunks including whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, apple slices, carrot rounds or sticks, melon balls
- **Sticky & Tough Foods:** such as, large spoonfuls/chunks of peanut butter/nut butters, marshmallows, string cheese, caramel, chewing gum, dried fruit, tough meat chunks, gummy candies
- **Hard, Small & Dry Foods:** such as, nuts, seeds, popcorn, pretzels, chips, raw carrots, whole corn kernels, wheat germ, bread crusts

Preparing Food:

- Infants: Cut food into pieces $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or smaller
- Toddlers: Cut food into pieces $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or smaller
- Modify textures when needed: soften, finely dice, or mash foods to reduce choking risk, especially for younger toddlers

Choking Prevention Tips:

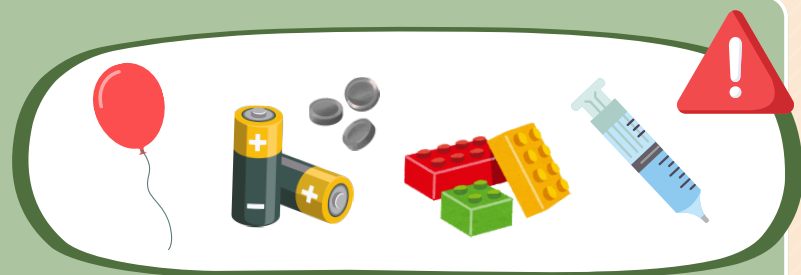
- All children should be seated and supervised during meals and while eating
- Never let children run, walk, play, or lie down while eating
- Avoid foods that are round, firm, small, thick, sticky, smooth, or dense, as they can completely block the airway
- Assess each child's chewing ability before offering new foods. Children under 3 years of age with delayed teeth eruption or limited chewing skills may need softer or smaller pieces
- Caregiver should model active chewing



MATERIAL CHOKING HAZARDS AND PREVENTION TIPS

Objects to Avoid:

- Coins
- Small balls and marbles
- Toys with small parts and/or squeezable pieces
- Erasers
- Broken crayons
- Pen and marker caps
- Small magnets
- Bottle caps
- Batteries (especially button batteries)
- Sharp items such as push pins, thumb tacks, paper clips, safety pins, and staples
- Latex balloons
- Jewelry and beads
- Water beads
- Medicine syringes



Choking Prevention Tips:

- Avoid objects smaller than 1¾ inches (about the size of a toilet paper tube) for children under 3 years of age
- Check the manufacturer's recommended age before giving a toy to a child
- Regularly inspect floors, low shelves, and play areas for small or broken items
- Check toys and materials often for loose or broken parts
- Check what children bring from home in their pockets
- Do not use raw kidney beans, Styrofoam, or powdery materials like flour, as they can be swallowed or inhaled
- Actively supervise all play and sensory activities to make sure materials are used safely



RESOURCES:

[Prevention of Choking Among Children from the American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[Preventing Choking from Nemours KidsHealth](#)

[Choking Prevention for Babies & Children from the American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[Choking Hazards from the CDC](#)