

## Choking Prevention Food Advice

Children under 4 years of age are at the greatest risk of choking. Almost 90 percent of children who die from choking are under the age of 4. Young children are still learning how to chew properly, and they often swallow things whole. Young children also like to put things in their mouths, but their small airways can become easily blocked. Nearly any food can cause choking children so it is important to make sure that food is served in the appropriate sizes, shapes, and textures to reduce the risk of choking. Always supervise children during eating time.

### What type of foods cause a choking risk?

Some foods are easy for young children to choke on when swallowing because they are the same size and shape as a child's airway. For example, peanuts may block the lower airway. A chunk of hot dog or a whole grape may completely block the upper airway. Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a penny which is about the size of a young child's throat. Foods likely to cause choking come in many shapes, sizes, and textures.

Child care providers should not offer to children under 4 years of age foods that pose the highest risk for choking. These include foods that are round, tube-shaped, small, hard, thick and sticky, smooth, slippery, or easily moulded to stick to the airway. Prevent choking by avoiding these foods or by changing their shape, size, and texture before offering them to children during meals and snacks. What are some common foods that may cause choking and should not be fed to young children under age 4?

### What type of foods pose choking risks?

Firm, smooth, or slippery foods that slide down the throat before chewing, such as:

- Whole grapes, cherries, berries, melon balls, or cherry and grape tomatoes
- Whole pieces of canned fruit
- Hot dog-shaped foods, including sausages
- Peanuts and nuts
- Whole beans
- Hard or round sweets



Sticky or tough foods that don't break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway, Such as:

- Chunks or spoonful's of peanut butter
- Large, hard pieces of uncooked dried fruits or vegetables such as Carrots
- Tough meat or large chunks of meat
- Large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese
- Fish with bones
- Marshmallows
- Chewing gum
- Chewy fruit snacks



Small, dry, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, such as:

- Popcorn
- Crisps
- Small pieces of raw vegetable (like raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, or celery), or other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables
- Apples or other hard pieces of raw fruit, especially those with hard pits or seeds
- Raw green peas
- Peanuts, nuts, and seeds (like sunflower or pumpkin seeds)
- Plain wheat germ
- Whole-grain (like rice, wheat berries)
- Crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces



## How can I serve foods so they are easy for young children to chew?

You can help reduce the risks of choking on some foods by changing their shape, size, or texture, and by serving certain foods in small, manageable bites. Offer 2- to 4-year-olds the same variety of foods as the rest of the children in your care, but prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow. Use these simple tips to make these foods safe options for 2- to 4-year-old children.

- **Cook foods until soft enough** to pierce easily with a fork.
- **Cut soft food into thin slices or small pieces**—no larger than one-half inch ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " ).  
Cut soft, round foods, like hot dogs or string cheese, into short strips rather than round pieces
- **Remove all bones** from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking
- **Grind up meat**, chicken, and other tough foods
- **Cook foods**, such as carrots and celery, until slightly soft. Then, cut into sticks
- **Mash or purée** food until it is soft
- **Remove seeds** and hard pits from fruit
- **Cut grapes, cherries, berries, or melon balls in half lengthwise**, and then cut into smaller pieces
- **Grate or thinly** slice cheeses
- **Chop peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely** or grind before adding to prepared food
- **Spread peanut butter thinly** on crackers.