

Choking Prevention

Always watch and sit with children during meals and snacks. Young children, ages 2 to 3 especially, are at risk of choking on food and remain at risk until they can chew and swallow better by about age 4. You should offer 2- to 3-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.

Watch children during meals and snacks to make sure they:

- Sit quietly.
- Eat slowly.
- Chew food well before swallowing.
- Eat small portions and take only one bite at a time.
- Finish swallowing before leaving the table.

Prepare foods so that they are easy to chew:

- Cut foods into small pieces or thin slices.
- Cut round foods, like hot dogs, lengthwise into thin strips.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat.
- Cook food such as carrots or celery until slightly soft. Then cut into sticks.
- Remove seeds and pits from fruit.
- Spread peanut butter thinly.

The foods which are popular with young children are often the ones which have caused choking. Foods that may cause choking:

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

- Hot dog rounds
- Hard candy
- Large pieces of fruit
- Granola
- Peanuts
- Whole grapes
- Cherries with pits

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

- Popcorn
- Small pieces of raw carrot, celery, or other raw hard vegetables

- **Nuts and seeds**
- **Potato and corn chips**
- **Pretzels**

Sticky or tough foods that do not break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway like:

- **Spoonfuls or chunks of peanut butter or other nut/seed butters**
- **Chunks of meat**
- **Chewing gum**
- **Marshmallows**
- **Raisins and other dried fruit**