

Choking Prevention Tips

Children under four years of age are at higher risk of choking because they:

- Have less practice controlling food in their mouths
- Don't always chew food into small enough pieces
- Have small airways
- Explore the world by putting objects into their mouths

The most common items that cause choking in children are food, coins, toys, and latex balloons. By knowing the dangers, you can keep children safe and prevent choking.

Food Choking Hazards

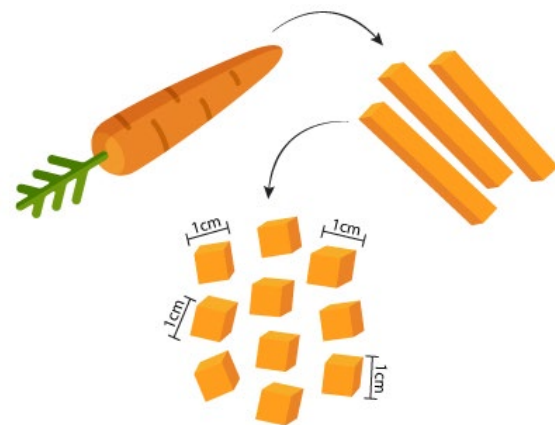
Although any food can cause choking, some foods are more unsafe than others. If your child is **under four years of age, avoid offering:**

- hard candies, cough drops
- gum, gummy candies
- popcorn
- marshmallows
- peanuts/nuts and seeds
- dried fruit like raisins
- snacks that use toothpicks or skewers

Foods that need special preparation

The shape, size and texture of some foods increases the risk of choking. Hard, smooth, round, stringy or sticky foods and those with pits, seeds or bones need special attention. Here are some common foods that can be choking hazards and things you can do to make them safer:

Food	Tip
Hard fruits and vegetables (e.g., apples, carrots)	Serve grated or cooked until soft
Stringy foods like celery and pineapple	Serve cut into small pieces (1cm or smaller)
Round or tube-shaped foods (e.g., grapes, cherry tomatoes, large berries, hotdogs, sausages, cheese strings)	Cut lengthwise and then into small pieces
Fruit with pits or seeds (e.g., cherries, watermelon, plums peaches)	Remove pits or seeds and cut into small pieces
Peanut or other nut butters	Serve thinly spread on toast or crackers; never serve on a spoon
Fish, poultry, or meat with bones	Remove bones and cut into small pieces



Small pieces, 1cm or less

Non-food Choking Hazards

Latex balloons are the leading cause of non-food choking in children. Mylar (foil) balloons are a safer option. Like food, the shape, size and texture of objects can increase the risk of choking. Objects that can fit into a cardboard toilet paper roll are considered unsafe. Any object that is round, ball or cylinder-shaped can block a child's airway. This includes batteries, buttons, bottle tops/caps, coins, marbles, small magnets, and dog food. Plastic corners snipped from milk bags or freezies can also be choking hazards.

Tips to keep your child safe from choking

- Watch your child during all meal and snack times
- Children should be seated while eating and drinking
- Do not let other children feed young children unless they are supervised
- Do not give children anything to eat or drink while they are walking, playing, or sitting in a moving car, bus, or stroller
- Keep mealtime calm and relaxed with no distractions
- Encourage your child to chew their food well
- Give your child enough time to eat
- Check your child's play area for choking hazards
- Make sure toys are in good condition and are age appropriate
- Teach older children why toys with small parts are unsafe for babies and younger children. Show them how to keep these toys safely out of reach
- Be extra careful at parties and holidays, when balloons, small toys and bowls of food are within easy reach
- Check pacifiers every day and throw them away if they show signs of breakdown or have been used for two months or more
- Consider learning infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)