

**Choking Hazards
Updated August 2023**

SUMMARY

Children of all ages can easily choke, especially those younger than age 5 because they have fewer and smaller teeth, weaker chewing ability and narrower airways than older children and adults. Most dangerous of all, they often put things in their mouths, unlike older children. Young children should always be supervised while eating and playing. Some potential choking hazards include: magnets, latex balloons, coins, marbles, toys with small parts, small balls, pen or marker caps, button type batteries, medicine syringes, screws, stuffing from a bean bag chair, rings, earrings, crayons, erasers, staples, safety pins, small stones, tiny figures, and holiday decorations including tinsel, or ornaments and lights.

TIPS FOR MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE**General**

- Avoid allowing children to play with small objects unsupervised
- Cut food into small pieces
- Do not allow children to eat hard candy
- Children should not eat when walking, riding in a car or playing

Older infants and toddlers

- Cut food into ¼ inch cubes (about the size of a pea)
 - Examples of food that need this preparation: hot dogs/sausage, apples/pears, celery, beans, cherry/grape tomatoes, grapes, cherries, strawberries and meat/chicken.
- Spread peanut butter thinly
- Avoid small, sticky or hard foods
 - Example include: skittles/M&Ms, nuts, popcorn, seeds, dried fruit, gum/gum drops, gummy candy or chips
- Do not allow children to eat marshmallows
- Bagels or crusty bread should be avoided as it can become gummy when chewed

Preschoolers

- Cut food into ½ inch pieces
- Cheese should be thinly sliced or ½ inch pieces
- Round foods should be cut in half lengthwise, i.e. hot dogs, grapes, tomatoes, strawberries
- Spread peanut butter thinly
- Hard candy over ½" in diameter and gum should not be provided

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q.** Is there a way to easily identify items that may be a choking hazard?
- A.** Providers and parents can use a choke tube guide to judge whether an item is a choking hazard. It is a plastic device available in most baby stores or juvenile products stores. You simply insert a toy or a piece of food into the tube and if it fits in the tube, it poses a risk.
- Q.** What should I do for someone choking?
- A.** Parents and caregivers should learn first aid for choking and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in the event a choking episode occurs.