



Choking prevention tips

Parents and caregivers might worry about the risk of choking when feeding babies and young children. Children are most at risk of choking when they are less than **four** years of age.

It is important to watch your baby or child when they are eating. Although any food can cause choking, some foods are more unsafe than others.

To lower the risk of choking, watch for foods that are:

- Hard, small and round
- Smooth and sticky
- Hard to chew
- Do not melt quickly

These foods can get stuck in your baby's or child's throat. This will stop air from getting into their lungs.

Choking is an emergency situation. Call 9-1-1 immediately if your child is not able to cough the food out.



Foods that can cause choking in babies and children (under four years of age)

- Chewing gum
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Cough drops
- Fish with bones
- Foods held together with toothpicks or skewers
- Fruit leathers
- Fruit with pits (such as cherries)
- Hard candies
- Hard chips (such as nacho chips)
- Hard cookies
- Hard pieces of raw vegetables or fruit, such as carrots and apples
- Jujube or gummie candies
- Mini jelly cups or jellied fruit
- Peanut butter or other nut butters on a spoon or spread thickly
- Popcorn
- Tapioca (large)
- Vegetables and fruit with tough skins (such as grapes, olives or grape tomatoes)
- Whole nuts (by itself or in foods)
- Whole raisins
- Whole seeds (by itself or in foods)
- Wieners or hot dogs

Tips for feeding safely

Gagging

Gagging is not the same as choking. Your child may gag sometimes. They usually gag to stop from choking. If you react and get upset, your child may become upset as well. Try to stay calm if gagging occurs.

When preparing food for your baby or child, keep the size of the pieces of food between ½ and 1 centimetre. Other tips to help make food safer include:

- Cut grapes, melon balls, grape and cherry tomatoes and olives in half or quarters
- Cut wieners lengthwise and then into small pieces
- Grate raw carrots and other hard vegetables or fruit
- Remove skins and/or pits from fruit and vegetables
- Soak raisins in water to soften
- Spread peanut and nut butters thinly on toast or crackers

Tips to prevent choking

In addition to making sure the foods you offer are safe, there are other things you can do to create safe mealtimes. They include:

- Watch your baby or child while they are eating, even at snack time
- Make sure your baby or child is sitting upright in a highchair or booster seat; not walking,

laughing, running or lying down

- Keep meal and snack time calm and relaxed. Talking or laughing with food in their mouths is unsafe
- Keep portions small
- Encourage your baby or child to chew their food well
- Give your baby or child time to eat slowly and carefully. Try not to hurry them or feed them more than they are willing to eat
- Be very careful with the foods you choose if feeding children in a car

Mesh feeding bags

Mesh feeding bags have become a popular item. Foods are placed in the mesh bag and babies can hold onto the handle and get the flavour of the food without risk of choking. Although this is a safe product, it will not teach your baby how to eat pieces of food and can delay your baby from accepting table foods. It can also increase the risk for dental caries if your baby uses the mesh bag throughout the day.

Consider learning how to help a choking baby or child by taking an infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) class. Call York Region Community and Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or ask at your local Early Years Centre to find out about CPR classes.