



Choking prevention tips

Nearly all (94%) hospitalizations due to breathing threats in children are from choking on food or other objects. The most common items that cause injury or death in children are food, coins and toys including latex balloons.

You can lower the risks of choking by becoming aware of the various choking hazards.

Why do children choke more easily?

Older babies and young children explore their world by putting things in their mouths. Although they have a strong gag and cough reflex, their small airways make a blockage more likely. If an object is trapped, mucous and secretions will further create a seal and block the airway. Furthermore, a child's cough is not as effective as an adult's to clear a blocked airway making choking an emergency situation.

Non-food choking hazards

Latex balloons are the leading cause of choking deaths resulting from non-food objects. Most incidents occur when a child chews on a deflated balloon and then suddenly inhales. A broken latex balloon is of particular risk because it can conform to a child's airway and form an airtight seal making rescue efforts very difficult.

The shape, size, and consistency of objects can increase the risk of choking. Objects that can fit into a cardboard toilet paper roll (less than 1.25 inches or 3.2 cm in diameter),

similar to a child's airway, are considered unsafe.

Any object that is round, egg-shaped or cylindrical can completely block a child's airway. This includes:

- Balls
- Batteries
- Buttons
- Coins
- Marbles
- Spherical toys or toy parts



Young children do not understand or recognize the dangers of choking. Here are some more tips for creating safe play:

- Supervise your child closely
- Check for small objects, including broken or loose pieces from toys or games around the space where your child is playing
- Follow age recommendations on toy packages
- 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
- Discourage unsafe fantasy play (e.g., using a rope around the neck like a leash)

Children who are using pacifiers are at greater risk of choking if the pacifier becomes damaged. Check pacifiers often and throw them away if they show signs of breakdown or have been used for more than two months.

Food choking hazards

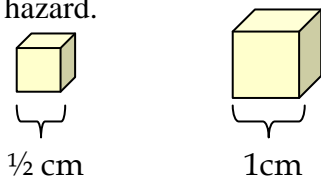
Children under four years of age are at a higher risk of choking on food because they:

- Don't have the teeth and chewing ability needed to grind food down to a small, safe size
- Can be easily distracted and less focused while eating
- Are less likely to eat slowly

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

- Hard (e.g., raw carrots)
- Small and round (e.g., hard candies, gumballs)
- Smooth and sticky (e.g., peanut butter spread thick or on a spoon)

When preparing meals and snacks, offer soft foods cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cm pieces. This way, it's big enough for little hands to grab but not big enough to be a choking hazard.



Help teach your child to be safer by having rules when eating. Here are some more tips for safer meal and snack times:

- Supervise your child during meals or snack time
- Use the highchair or booster seat harness straps to properly secure your child in an upright sitting position.
- Seat older children at the table; not walking, running or lying down
- Keep mealtime calm and relaxed
- Avoid excessive talking, laughing or crying with food in the mouth

- Discourage food games (e.g., throwing food in the air and catching it in the mouth)
- Encourage your child to chew their food well
- Give your child enough time to eat
- Do not make your child eat more than they are willing to (i.e., force feeding)
- Avoid eating in the car

Unsafe foods for children under four years of age	How to make the food safer
Chewing gum	Avoid food
Hard candies	Avoid food
Popcorn	Avoid food
Fruit and vegetables, with thick skin such as grapes or cherry tomatoes	Cut in quarters
Hard fruit and vegetables such as raw carrots or apples	Grate or cut into thin strips and/or cook to soft
Fruit with pits such as cherries and plums	Remove pits and cut into small pieces
Whole raisins	Avoid or cut into pieces or soak in water
Hot dogs, wieners and sausages	Slice lengthwise, then cut into pieces
Peanuts, other nuts and seeds	Chop or crush
Peanut and other nut butters	Spread thinly on crackers or bread

Consider learning infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). For more information on infant/child CPR classes, safety and nutrition for your child, contact York Region's Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 (TTY 1-866-252-9933) or email HC@york.ca.