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## Safety Series

# Choking Hazard Safety



*Helping you, as a parent,  
to make healthy and safe choices.*

The questions and answers in this brochure are designed to help you, as a parent, make healthy and safe choices for your children.



## What is a choking hazard?

A choking hazard is any object that could be caught in a child's throat blocking their airway and making it difficult or impossible to breathe.

## What different foods are choking hazards for children?

Food is a common choking hazard. Many children do not chew their food well so they try to swallow it whole. Foods that are the most dangerous are round and hard. If your child is 4 years of age or younger either take extra safety measures or don't feed the following foods to your children at all:

- » Hot dogs
- » Nuts and seeds
- » Chunks of meat or cheese
- » Whole grapes
- » Hard, gooey, or sticky candy
- » Popcorn
- » Chunks of peanut butter
- » Raw vegetables
- » Raisins
- » Chewing gum
- » Marshmallows



## How small should I cut food for my child?



Cut food into pieces no larger than one half-inch; this will make sure that if your child swallows their food whole, it won't get stuck in their throat.

## My child likes to walk around and eat, is this okay?

No, you need to insist that your child eat at the table. This will ensure that they're eating at an upright position, and they are focusing solely on eating.

## Is it okay to feed my kids in the car?

Feeding kids in the car is not a good idea. Kids that eat in the car are at risk for choking and often go unnoticed by the person who is driving.

## Is it important for me to supervise my child when they are eating?

Yes, you never know what might happen when you are not looking. If your child chokes on an object, the object stuck in their throat is not allowing oxygen to reach the brain. Within 4 minutes or less brain damage or even death can occur.

## My child is just beginning to crawl. Are there other objects I should be aware of for possible choking hazards?

Yes, infants and young children naturally put things in their mouth. When they begin to crawl, small objects that you normally wouldn't notice are key targets for them to choke on. To ensure a safe environment watch out for these objects or objects similar to these.

- » Latex balloons
- » Coins
- » Marbles
- » Toys with small parts
- » Toys that can be compressed to fit entirely into a child's mouth
- » Pen or marker caps
- » Small balls
- » Button batteries
- » Medicine syringes
- » Hair barrettes and beads

## Why are latex balloons a hazard for young children?

Latex balloons are a leading cause of choking deaths to children who are 8 years of age or younger. Children inhale latex balloons (*mostly while trying to inflate them*) or choke on their broken pieces. Latex is dangerous because it is a smooth material and can conform to the child's throat, blocking the airway and making it impossible to breathe. Performing the Heimlich Maneuver is usually no help because the air that does get through can make the blockage worse by completely covering the throat. Using your fingers can easily push the balloon further back into the airway. To be safe, never allow young children to play with latex balloons. Instead, give them the shiny foil balloons. They're easier to inflate and tend not to burst into pieces. Mylar is a common brand.

## How can I safe proof my house from objects that my child could choke on?

Before they begin to crawl, get down to your child's level and look for things that could be picked up, then check in and under furniture cushions. Also make sure your children's toys are always safely put away. Store toys for younger children separate from those for older children.



## My child has a toy labeled "not for children 3 and under," does age really matter?

Yes, you should always follow the age limit and avoid toys with small parts. If you are not sure which toys are choking hazards get a small parts tester, and pay attention to toys that have been recalled. (*See Toy Safety brochure*)

## What is a small parts tester?

A small parts tester is also called a "choke tube." It is designed to see what objects are small enough to be choking hazards to children 3 years of age and younger. If the object fits in the tester then it is too small for children of this age to play with.

## What should I do to be better prepared if my child chokes?

The best action to take is to be aware of all of the dangers and prevent them. If an emergency does occur be sure to call 911—with airway obstruction you can't waste any time. Also take a CPR class to better prepare yourself if your child or someone else needs help. Visit [www.nationwidechildrens.org/edu](http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/edu) or call 614-355-0662 to find out dates and times for Nationwide Children's Hospital CPR classes.