

Prevent kids from choking

Food—not toys—are the most common culprit of choking accidents in kids under 5. The reasons have a lot to do with a child's anatomy.

“Young children have underdeveloped swallowing mechanisms, immature teeth and narrow airways, which put them at a higher risk for choking on food,” said Dr. Nina Shapiro, a professor of head and neck surgery at the UCLA School of Medicine. “Plus, the diameter of a child's airway is about the size of their pinky, so high-risk foods can easily block their tiny airways and prevent their ability to breathe.”



HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Vegetables should be cooked and cut into small pieces.
- Hot dogs and cheese sticks should be cut lengthwise, then widthwise, and then into the shape of small moons.
- Grapes should be peeled and cut in half or quarters.
- Nut butters should be spread thinly onto crackers or bread.
- Young children should always be attended to by an adult when they eat and only eat developmentally appropriate foods.
- Children should sit up straight and not play or run while eating.



The list of high-risk foods for children under age 5 years includes many kid favorites:

- Cheese sticks
- Chewing gum
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Chunks of peanut butter
- Chunks of raw vegetables
- Dried fruit
- Grapes
- Hard or sticky candy and lollipops
- Hot dogs
- Nuts
- Popcorn
- Seeds such as pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds



If a child does choke and is unable to breathe, call 911 and perform the Heimlich maneuver. Even if the child seems to choke but then coughs and appears fine, the object may have become lodged, and the child should see a doctor.

10,000+
the number of
ER VISITS
FOR CHILDREN
CHOKING
on FOOD each YEAR



1 CHILD
dies every
5 DAYS
from a food-choking accident