

# Reducing health and safety risks when working with food and children

Many health and safety risks need to be considered, reviewed and managed when working in an early years setting

**Burns and scalding**

**Slips, trips and falls**

**Choking**

**Allergic reactions**

**Food poisoning**

## Burns and scalding

### How to prevent burns and scalding

Toddlers need to get used to their food being served hot, but they must also learn that it can cause injury.

Food should be left to cool for at least a minute before serving.

Get the practitioners used to tasting the food before serving it.

## What to do in case of injury

If a child gets burnt, run it under a cool, moving water flow for 20 minutes.

## Slips, trips and falls

### How to prevent slips, trips and falls

Always move food and drink on a trolley to avoid spillages and cover food when moving.

Be sure to cover food when transporting.

Be aware of your surroundings and how the rooms are laid out.

## What to do in case of injury

Procedures should be in place to deal with wet floors – check your risk assessment.

## Choking

### How to prevent choking

Adult supervision must occur during all mealtimes – children must be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.

Teach children to take small bites of food.

Make sure the food served to children is prepared correctly for their age and development.

## What to do in case of choking

### If you think a child is choking and cannot breathe properly:

- shout for help
- get them out of the chair
- support their chest and chin with one hand and – with the heel of your hand – give 5 sharp blows between the shoulder blades



## Allergic reactions

### How to prevent allergic reactions

Children must always be supervised, with extra care towards children with known allergies

## What to do in case of an allergic reaction

**Almost every allergic reaction starts within seconds or minutes after food consumption or contact. You must know the most common signs of a reaction:**

- Feeling sick/being sick.
- Tummy pain.
- Diarrhoea.
- Swelling of lips, face and eyes.
- Sneezing.
- A runny or blocked nose.
- Red, itchy, watery eyes.
- Wheezing and coughing.
- A red, itchy rash.
- Worsening of asthma or eczema symptoms.

Most allergic reactions are mild, but a severe reaction called anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock can occasionally occur. This is a medical emergency and needs urgent treatment - call 999 as this can be life threatening. Before calling 999 administer the child's autoinjector if they have one. Never move a child who is showing signs of anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis usually starts within seconds or minutes of coming into contact with something you're allergic to, such as a food, medicine or insect sting.

**Any one or more of the following symptoms may be present:**

- The child's throat or tongue swells.
- Difficulty breathing or breathing very fast.
- Difficulty swallowing, tightness in the child's throat or a hoarse voice.
- Wheezing, coughing or noisy breathing.
- Feeling tired or confused.
- Feeling faint, dizzy or fainting.
- Skin that feels cold to the touch.
- Blue, grey or pale skin, lips or tongue – if the child has brown or black skin, this may be easier to see on the palms of their hands or soles of their feet.
- The child may also have skin that has a rash, is swollen, raised, or itchy.



## Food poisoning

You must follow food safety laws when cooking food for any age. However, as the children in early years settings are classed as vulnerable, extra care must be taken.

### How to prevent food poisoning in your setting

- Cook food to the correct temperature. Cooked food needs to reach 63°C in England, over 75°C in Scotland and 75°C for reheating, before it is served, by using a temperature probe.
- Cooked food should not be stored at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- Check food deliveries are in the correct condition, correct temperature (under 8°C and ideally 5°C) and there is no cross contamination.
- Follow the correct colour coding for equipment to avoid cross contamination.
- Store food appropriately.
- Sanitise all contact surfaces.
- Ensure personal hygiene, including covering cuts.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly.
- Always wash your hands before handling food to reduce cross contamination.
- Always reheat food until it is steaming hot all the way through (you should only do this once).
- Do not wash raw chicken as this can splash bacteria around the kitchen.

For more information, see **Safer Food, Better Business**  
[www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb)

