

Food Safety Tips for Your Kids

When feeding young children up to about 6 years of age or younger, it's important to consider the size, shape and texture of what they'll be eating, as well as the setting in which you're feeding them. If a food is small or slippery, it may go down the throat without being chewed and block the child's windpipe. To make foods and feeding occasions as safe as possible for kids, follow these food safety tips.

Be Selective

Small, rounded foods, especially if they are relatively hard or smooth, can be more difficult for young children to eat because they may swallow them whole. Foods like this should generally be chopped up into smaller pieces (1/2-inch or smaller) before being given to children 6 years old or younger.

To help ensure food safety for your kids, keep in mind this list of potentially troublesome foods or forms of some otherwise appropriate foods:

- **Hard, gooey or sticky candies**
- **Nuts, seeds and peanuts**
- **Whole grapes**
- **Raw vegetables, such as carrots, beans, peas**
- **Whole or round-cut hot dogs**
- **Marshmallows, including mini-marshmallows**
- **Spoonfuls of peanut butter**
- **Fish with bones**
- **Raisins**
- **Other dried fruit**
- **Popcorn**
- **Ice cubes**
- **Pretzels**
- **Chips**
- **Chunks of meat or cheese**

Be Prepared

One of the most important food safety tips for kids, should your child choke on a food, is to be ready for quick action. Take a course in basic first aid and rescue techniques that includes information on choking incidents and how to respond to them. Your local American Red Cross chapter offers these types of classes, as do some employers' insurance programs. Also, consult with your pediatrician for other potential choking hazards and tips on preventing it. Check these sites for more information on choking and children:



Cut Before You Serve

Don't give small children difficult-to-eat foods in whole form. When children get old enough to chew hot dogs, grapes, carrots and other difficult foods, cut them into small, strip-shaped pieces before serving. Also, encourage your child to chew thoroughly.

Keep a Watchful Eye

Children 6 or under should always be supervised while being fed. At this age, children do not have the ability to judge how to eat safely, and may engage in running, jumping and other inappropriate behaviors while eating. Make sure your child is seated at the table, or at least sitting down when eating.

Follow the “No-Eating-in-the-Car” Rule

If your child chokes while you are driving, you may not have enough time to act, so it's a good idea to avoid eating in the car altogether.

Observe Your Child's Eating Abilities

Every child is unique. One 4-year-old child may be much better than another when it comes to eating some of the foods listed above. So watch your children carefully as they grow, and use your good judgment about what to feed them.

The National Safety Council (NSC) provides excellent information on choking and young children, including step-by-step instructions on how to prevent choking, the Heimlich Maneuver and more.
<https://bit.ly/48VSBlw>

The Mayo Clinic Provides clear and useful information about prevention of choking in young children as well as intervention across all ages.
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-choking/basics/art-20056637>