

Chapter 9

Choking Prevention

What's In This Chapter?

By the end of this chapter, child care providers will be able to:

- 1 Identify ways to reduce a baby's risk of choking during mealtime.
- 2 Name at least three finger foods that are safe for older babies.
- 3 Explain how to prepare foods to lower choking risk.

Babies are at a higher risk of choking than older children since they do not chew well and have small airways. It is very important to be careful about the types of food you feed a baby. Serve foods that are the right size, shape, and **texture** for a baby.

Preventing Choking During Mealtime

At mealtime, make sure to:

- **Sit and watch babies.** Do not leave babies or young children under the age of 4 alone when they are eating.
- **Keep mealtimes calm and not rushed.** Avoid disruptions and distractions when eating.
- **Make sure the hole in the nipple of the baby's bottle is not too large.** If the bottle is held upside down, the falling drops should follow each other closely and not make a stream.

- **Have babies sit in an upright position when eating.** Laying babies down or letting them crawl or walk while eating increases their risk of choking. Make sure babies are in a high chair or feeding seat while eating **solid foods**.



Upside down bottle with falling drops of milk, not a stream.

For more information on the right texture for a baby's development, see **page 59** in **Chapter 6: Feeding Solid Foods**.

Foods To Avoid That Can Cause Choking

Some foods are harder for babies to eat. Do not feed foods or pieces of food that are the size or shape of a small marble to babies or young children. Foods this size can be swallowed whole and could get caught in a baby's throat and cause choking.

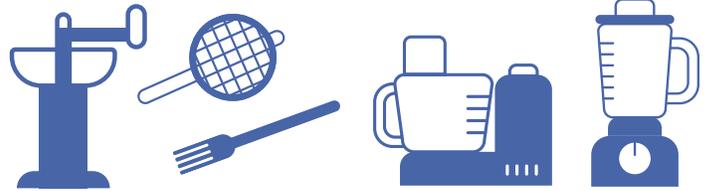


Preparing Foods To Lower Choking Risk

When preparing foods for babies, make sure they are in a form that a baby can easily chew. Think of the shape, size, and texture, when choosing foods. To prevent choking, it is recommended to:

- cook or steam foods until they are soft enough to easily pierce with a fork.
- cut soft foods into small pieces (no larger than ½ inch) or thin slices that can easily be chewed.
- cut round foods, such as hot dogs, into short strips (lengthwise) rather than round pieces.

- remove all bones from poultry, meat, and fish.
- cut grapes and cherry tomatoes into quarters.
- remove pits, seeds, and tough skins or peels from ripe fruit and cut the fruit into small pieces.
- modify the texture of foods by pureeing, mashing, grinding, or finely chopping.



Small pieces of ground beef no larger than ½ inch.

In This Chapter

In this chapter, you learned about how to prevent choking by preparing foods to the right size, shape, and texture for meals and snacks. In the next chapter, you will learn about food allergies and intolerances and the signs of an allergic reaction.

For Child Care Providers: Making Foods Safer for Baby

Babies and young children are at the highest risk of choking on food. They remain at high risk until they have more teeth and are better able to chew and swallow. Young children die from choking more than any other home accident. You can help make eating safer for babies and young children.

Prepare Foods So They Are Easy To Chew

- Grind up tough meats.
- Cook or steam food until it is soft.
- Puree, mash, or finely chop foods into small pieces (no larger than ½ inch) or thin slices or strips (lengthwise).
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving.
- Remove seeds, pits, tough skins, and peels from fruits and vegetables.



Always prepare foods so they are easy to chew.

Avoid serving small, sticky, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole. These foods are not creditable for infants in the CACFP.

- Popcorn
- Nuts and seeds (including breads, crackers, and ready-to-eat cereals that contain nuts and seeds)
- Hard candy
- Chunks of peanut butter and other nut butters
- Marshmallows
- Chewing gum



Older baby eating small pieces of bread at snack.

A handout from *Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*

<https://teamn nutrition.usda.gov> • FNS 786J • March 2019

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Always sit and watch babies and young children at mealtime to make sure they do not choke.



Prepare foods to the right shape, size, and texture to lower the risk of the baby choking.



Cut foods into small pieces no larger than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or in short thin slices or strips to lower the risk of the baby choking.



Avoid serving small, sticky, or hard foods that are difficult to chew.

Check Your Knowledge

1. Fill in the blanks:

Cut soft foods into small pieces (no larger than _____ inch) or thin _____ or _____ that can easily be chewed.

2. All of the following finger foods are creditable in the CACFP infant meal pattern and can be prepared the right way to avoid choking, *except*:

- A Small strips of bread
- B Grapes cut into quarters
- C Chunks of peanut butter or other nut butters
- D Soft cooked, chopped vegetables

3. A parent brings in a container of whole grapes for her 11-month-old. To build a good partnership with the family, which of the responses may be better to say?

- A I will be happy to serve these to your child at the next meal, just as they are.
- B Fruits are always an excellent choice. To make these safer and reduce choking risk, I will cut these grapes in quarters before I serve them to your child.
- C Grapes are not creditable in the CACFP infant meal pattern.
- D None of the above.

ANSWER: 1. 1/2; slices or strips • 2. C • 3. B