

# Potential Choking Foods Procedure

## Purpose

This procedure informs site teams about foods that present choking hazards for young children.

## Guidance

Certain foods present a greater risk for choking for children under the age of four. Young children do not grind or chew their food well and may attempt to swallow food whole. Choking incidents often occur when children are distracted. Nutritious foods may be hazardous for young children unless they are cooked or cut into small pieces.

Always take caution when serving food to young children and especially for children under the age of three. Infants and toddlers are at the greatest risk for choking while eating. It is imperative that an adult monitor their food intake at all times.

## Procedure

### Reduce the risk of choking

- Remind children to eat slowly and chew food thoroughly.
- Make sure children remain seated at the table until finished eating.
- Do not allow children to stuff their mouth with food. Choking can occur when too much food is placed in the mouth and children attempt to swallow the entire amount or do not adequately chew the food before swallowing.
- Keep the emotional atmosphere calm at mealtimes.
- Model appropriate amounts of food eaten at one time.

### Do not serve children under the age of four the following foods:

- Popcorn
- Candy/marshmallows

### Do not serve children under the age of three the following foods:

- Popcorn, chips or pretzels
- Candy/marshmallows

Food	Modifications for children ages 3-4	Modifications for children under 3
Hot dogs, corn dogs, sausage rounds  Discouraged – high in fat, sodium, and highly processed. If no other healthier protein source is available, hot dogs must be:	cut in half lengthwise	cut in half lengthwise and then into small pieces
Meat, fruit	Cut into chunks smaller than ½ inch in diameter	

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Food	Modifications for children ages 3-4	Modifications for children under 3
Cheese	Cut into chunks smaller than ½ inch in diameter	Cut into thin slices; Cut cheese sticks in half lengthwise
Nut butter (peanut, soy, etc.)	Spread lightly – never offer in spoonfuls	Discouraged – If you are going to serve, spread very thinly on bread or fruit. You can also mix with applesauce and spread thinly on bread.
Grapes	Cut in half lengthwise – NEVER offer whole grapes	
Cherry tomatoes	Cut in half – NEVER offer whole cherry tomatoes	
Nuts, seeds	Many sites are nut free and therefore these foods should never appear on their menu. If you are going to serve nuts and seeds, chop finely. Use only as an ingredient and not a single component.	
Raisins, dried fruit		Use only as an ingredient and not a single component.
Hard raw vegetables or fruits (ex: carrots, apples, jicama, parsnips, etc.)	Carrots: Steam, grate, or cut lengthwise into thin strips  Celery: Cut into thin strips	Diameter should be no larger than ½ inch – cut into thin strips, shred, or finely grate. Steam or chop/grate if served as a finger food.
Whole beans (legumes), grain kernels (ex: corn)	Large whole beans (fava beans, navy beans, pinto beans and lima beans): Use only as an ingredient and not a single component.	Mash when served as a first food  Large whole beans (fava beans, navy beans, pinto beans and lima beans): Use only as an ingredient and not a single component.

## Resources

*Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs.* April 2011. By American Public Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics.

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView.cfm>

*Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Model Child Care Health Policies, Aronson SS, ed. 5th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014. [www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org](http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org)*