



Choking/Airway Obstruction Safety

Putting things in their mouths is one of the ways that babies and small children explore the world. Anything that fits can be a danger. Choking is usually caused by food, toys, and other small objects that can easily lodge in a child's small airway. Pay special attention to the following to prevent your child from choking:



Food

- Don't give a child under age 4 any hard, smooth foods that can partially or completely block the windpipe. These include nuts of any type, sunflower seeds, watermelon with seeds, grapes, cherries with pits, raw carrots, raw peas, raw celery, popcorn, and hard candy.
- Some soft foods can also cause choking because they are the right shape for blocking a child's windpipe. These foods, including hot dogs, sausages, grapes, and caramels, can be served if they are chopped into small pieces. Spoonfuls of peanut butter and chewing gum should also be regarded as potential choking hazards.
- When babies begin eating solids, beware of foods like raw apples and pears, which may be difficult to chew without teeth (or with just a few teeth).
- Encourage children to sit when eating and to chew thoroughly. Teach them to chew and swallow their food before talking or laughing.
- Never let children run, play sports, or ride in the car with gum, candy, or lollipops in their mouths.
- Be especially vigilant during adult parties, when nuts and other foods might be easily accessible to small hands. Clean up early and carefully, and check the floor for dropped foods that can cause choking.

Toys

- Always follow all manufacturers' age recommendations when buying toys. Some toys have small parts that can cause choking, so heed **all** warnings on a toy's packaging.
- Never buy vending-machine toys for small children; these toys do not have to meet safety regulations and often contain small parts.
- Check toys frequently for loose or broken parts - for example, a stuffed animal's loose eye or a broken plastic hinge.
- Warn older children not to leave loose game parts or toys with small pieces in easy reach of younger siblings.

Balloons and Other Small Objects

- **Never** give balloons to a child younger than age eight. A child who is blowing up or chewing on a balloon can choke by inhaling it. Inflated balloons pose a risk because they can pop without warning and be inhaled.
- Safely dispose of button-cell batteries.
- Encourage children not to put pencils, crayons, or erasers in their mouths when coloring or drawing.
- Don't reward small children with coins.