



Top 10 Foods That Cause Kids to Choke

For Children under Four Years of Age

Small, round, firm foods, stringy and sticky foods, and those that swell when moistened are the most dangerous foods for children under the age of four. You should not serve these foods to children in this age group, unless you are able to prepare them in a way that will decrease the foods' potential to cause choking.

The following is a list of the top 10 problem foods and suggestions for preparation in order to lessen their dangerous effect.

1. **NUTS-** Peanuts are the leading cause of childhood choking. All nuts pose a threat because of their size and shape, and therefore should be avoided. If nuts are the only available option, chop finely.
2. **HOT DOGS-** One of the most common foods to choke small children. Hot dogs must be cut up in pieces in order to be safe to serve to children. Slice lengthwise, and then chop into irregularly shaped bite-size pieces.
3. **CELERY-** Celery's stringy consistency makes it difficult for kids to chew and swallow properly. Use a peeler to remove the fibrous outside layer of the celery stick, and cut into small pieces before serving.
4. **POPCORN-** The size, shape, and sharp irregular edges of popcorn make it a prime food that can induce choking.
5. **GRAPES-** Cut grapes in half and remove any seeds before serving them to a child. Cherries should also be pitted and chopped before being given to eat.
6. **RAISINS-** Do not give raisins to children under the age of two. Two to Four-year olds should only be served plump, moist raisins, or ones that have been cooked in foods like pudding or bread.
7. **HARD CANDY-** Small, hard, sucking candies are dangerous because children tend to bite down into them, breaking off sharp edges in their mouths, or they could also accidentally swallow them whole, blocking their airway.
8. **CARROTS-** Raw carrots should be finely shredded. Cook carrots thoroughly, until mushy to the touch.
9. **APPLES-** Always chop apples and other firm fruits into manageable bite-size pieces. Cook until soft in texture. Be sure to remove all apple seeds-they contain arsenic.
10. **PEANUT BUTTER-** The safest way to prepare peanut butter is to spread a very thin layer of creamy peanut butter (no chunks) on a slice of bread, and serve with a beverage. Blend with jam or applesauce. Children under the age of four should never eat clumps of peanut butter from a spoon or finger.

How to Prevent a Child from Choking

Children under the age of four are particularly susceptible to choking on foods and small objects. Here are several ways to reduce the risk of choking:

- **SHOW** young children how to take small bites, and how to chew their food well before swallowing.
- **INSIST** that kids eat while sitting at the table. Children should never walk, run, or play when they have food (or other objects) in their mouths.
- **SUPERVISE** meal times to make sure small children don't take unsafe foods from older kids.
- **REMOVE** toys with small parts and other small items like coins, buttons, balloons, marbles, and button-size batteries from children's reach.

If a child starts choking but CAN breath, speak, cry, or cough strongly, don't pound on the child's back or perform the Heimlich maneuver. The blockage can be made worse if you don't succeed. Call the child's physician immediately for advice. If the child **CANNOT** breathe, or has a weak cough and loss of color, call 911 and begin administering choking first aid procedure.