

Safe kids 😊 Healthy kids 😊 Happy kids

Toddlers Can Choke on Food

Choking is the leading cause of death for kids 3 years old and younger. Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat thousands of children for choking incidents.

Toddlers are curious and explore with their mouths. They can easily choke on the small toys, food and objects that they put in their mouths. In fact, 60% of non-fatal choking incidents involve food.

Federal laws require choking warning labels on small toys and games with small parts. Yet, food has no warning labels. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the AMA warns parents.

Why do kids choke on food? Children younger than 7 years of age do not have all of their molars. Molars in the back of the mouth grind food. Even though toddlers have teeth, they cannot grind food. Food not crushed by teeth may stick inside the child's narrow airway.

Every child is at risk for choking. Parents can reduce this risk.

- Watch your children as they eat.
- Cut foods such as grapes and other fruits, meat, cheese



and raw vegetables into small pieces and shapes that will not block the child's small airway. Some doctors suggest cutting food into pea-sized or no larger than one-half inch pieces.

- Cut hotdogs lengthwise and widthwise.
- Cook vegetables so they are soft and easy to chew.
- Give only small servings of peanut butter or similar soft foods that could block the airway. Big chunks of peanut butter can change

shape in a child's mouth. It can form a plug that kids cannot cough up.

- Do not allow small kids to eat while they run and play.
- Offer liquids when children eat. However, do not let them eat and drink at the same time.
- Never give young children hard candy, popcorn, nuts, sunflower seeds, watermelon with seeds or marshmallows.

Always follow these safety tips.

Parents should know that it is hard to prevent *all* choking incidents. Be prepared. Learn infant and child CPR and choking first aid.

 For more information on choking log onto www.aap.org and www.kidsgrowth.com

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

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