

New AAP Policy on Choking Prevention

Choking is a leading cause of injury and death among children, especially children 3 years of age or younger. Food, toys and coins account for most of the choking-related events in young children, who put objects in their mouths as they explore new environments. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) policy statement, "Prevention of Choking Among Children," published in the March issue of *Pediatrics* (appearing online February 22), contains recommendations for government agencies, manufacturers, parents, teachers, child care workers and health care professionals to help prevent choking among children. Because the size, shape and consistency of certain toys and food increase the possibility of being a choking hazard, and because many of the prevention strategies currently in place to prevent choking on toys have not yet been implemented to prevent choking on food, the AAP recommends:

- Warning labels on foods that pose a high choking risk.
- A recall of food products that pose a significant choking hazard.
- The establishment of nationwide food-related choking-incident surveillance and reporting system.
- Food manufacturers should design new food and redesign existing food to minimize choking risk.
- CPR and choking first aid should be taught to parents, teachers and child care providers.

Pediatricians should continue to provide guidance to parents on safe and appropriate food and toy choices, as recommended by the AAP.

Choking Prevention

What can I do to keep my child from choking?

Choking is a very common cause of unintentional injury or death in children under age one, and the danger remains significant until the age of five. Objects such as safety pins, small parts from toys, and coins cause choking, but food is responsible for most incidents. You must be particularly watchful when children around the age of one are sampling new foods. Here are some additional suggestions for preventing choking.

- Don't give young children hard, smooth foods (i.e., peanuts, raw vegetables) that must be chewed with a grinding motion. Children don't master that kind of chewing until age four, so they may attempt to swallow the food whole. Do not give peanuts to children until age seven or older.
- Don't give your child round, firm foods (like hot dogs and carrot sticks) unless they are chopped completely. Cut or break food into bite-size pieces (no larger than ½ inch [1.27 cm]) and encourage your child to chew thoroughly.
- Supervise mealtime for your infant or young child. Don't let her eat while playing or running. Teach her to chew and swallow her food before talking or laughing.
- Chewing gum is inappropriate for young children.

Because young children put everything into their mouths, small non-food objects are also responsible for many choking incidents. Look for age guidelines in selecting toys, but use your own judgment concerning your child. Also be aware that certain objects have been associated with choking, including uninflated or broken balloons; baby powder; items from the trash (e.g., eggshells, pop-tops from beverage cans); safety pins; coins; marbles; small balls; pen or marker caps; small, button- type batteries; hard, gooey, or sticky candy or vitamins; grapes; and popcorn. If you're unsure whether an object or food item could be harmful, you can purchase a standard small-parts cylinder at juvenile products stores or test toys using a toilet paper roll, which has a diameter of approximately 1¾ inches.

Last Updated 6/14/2010

Source [Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 \(Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)