



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Choking Prevention

In addition to food, there are household items that can become choking hazards. You can help ensure a safe environment by keeping these items away from infants and young children:

- Latex balloons
- Coins
- Marbles
- Toys with small parts
- Toys that can be compressed to fit entirely into a child's mouth
- Small balls
- Pen or marker caps
- Small button-type batteries
- Medicine syringes

Choking can be prevented. Before your child begins to crawl, get down on his level and look for dangerous items. If you have older children, pay extra attention to their toys and be sure your younger child can't get into them. In addition to thoroughly childproofing your home, keep this list of choking prevention tips in mind:

- *Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)* (basic life support).
- *Be aware that balloons pose a choking risk* to children of any age.
- *Keep the following foods from children until 4 years of age:*
 - Hot dogs
 - Nuts and seeds
 - Chunks of meat or cheese
 - Whole grapes
 - Hard, gooey, or sticky candy
 - Popcorn
 - Chunks of peanut butter
 - Raw vegetables
 - Raisins
 - Chewing gum
- *Insist that children eat at the table*, or at least while sitting down. They should never run, walk, play or lie down with food in their mouths.
- *Cut food for infants and young children* into pieces no larger than one-half inch and teach them to chew their food well.
- *Supervise mealtime* for infants and young children.

- *Be aware of older children's actions.* Many choking incidents occur when older brothers or sisters give dangerous foods, toys or small objects to a younger child.
- *Avoid toys with small parts* and keep other small household items out of reach of infants and young children.
- *Follow the age recommendations on toy packages.* Age guidelines reflect the safety of a toy based on any possible choking hazard as well as the child's physical and mental abilities at various ages.
- *Check under furniture and between cushions* for small items that children could find and put in their mouths.
- *Do not let infants and young children play with coins.*

In addition to creating a safe environment for your child, it is important to learn basic life support skills. Post a first aid chart in your home; it can be a valuable reminder in the case of an emergency. However, these instructions should *not* take the place of an approved class in basic first aid, CPR or emergency prevention. Contact your local American Red Cross office or the American Heart Association to find out about classes offered in your area. Most of the classes teach basic first aid, CPR and emergency prevention along with what to do for a choking infant or child. Your pediatrician also can help you understand these steps and talk to you about the importance of supervising mealtime and identifying dangerous foods and objects.

Related Article

- [Choking: Common Dangers for Children](#)

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