

Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

| Vegetable and fruits | Advice |
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| Pips or stones in fruit | Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit. |
| Small fruits | Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters). |
| Large fruits and firm fruits | Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering. |
| Vegetables | Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering. |
| Skin on fruit and vegetables | Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily. |
| Cooking fruit and vegetables | Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons. |
| Meat and fish | Advice |
| Sausages and hot dogs | Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily. |
| Meat or fish | Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat. |
| Cheese | Advice |
| Grate or cut cheese | Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible. |
| Nuts and seeds | Advice |
| Chop or flake whole nuts | Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old. |
| Bread | Advice |
| White bread and other breads | White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips. |
| Snacks and other foods | Advice |
| Popcorn | Do not give babies and young children popcorn. |
| Chewing gum and marshmallows | Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows. |
| Peanut butter | Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread. |
| Jelly cubes | Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes. |
| Boiled sweets and ice cubes | Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes. |
| Raisins and other dried fruits | Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces. |

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>

and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>