

USDA Choking Prevention Information for children birth – 4 Years

What are some common foods that may cause choking and should not be fed to young children under age 4?

- Whole grapes, cherries, berries, melon balls, or cherry and grape tomatoes (cut in small pieces are fine)
- Whole pieces of canned fruit (cut in small piece are fine)
- Hot dog-shaped foods, including sausages, meat sticks, cheese sticks, or toddler hot dogs (even when cut into round slices) (however cut into strips are fine)
- Peanuts, nuts, seeds
- Whole beans (mashed for children under 2 years are fine)
- Hard or round candy, jelly beans
- Whole-grain kernels (like wheat berries for children under 2 years)
- Popcorn
- Carrots (unless partially cooked)
- Hard pretzels
- Potato and corn chips, or other similar snack foods
- Small pieces of raw vegetables (like raw peas, string beans, corn or celery), or other raw hard vegetables (these are fine partially cooked for children under 2 years)
- Apples or other hard pieces of raw fruit, (these are fine partially cooked for children under 2 years)
- Crackers or breads with seeds, or nut pieces
- Dried fruits or vegetables
- Tough meat or large chunks of meat (meat cut into small pieces is fine for young children)
- Large chunks of cheese (small chunks of cheese are fine)
- Fish with bones
- Marshmallows
- Chewing gum
- Caramels, gum drops, and gummy candies, or other gooey or sticky candy
- Chunks or spoonful of peanut butter or nut and seed butters

You can help reduce the risks of choking on some foods by changing their shape, size, or texture, and by serving certain foods in small, manageable bites. Offer 2- to 4-year-olds the same variety of foods as the rest of the children in your care, but prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow. Use these simple tips to make these foods safe options for 2- to 4-year-old children.

- Cut soft food into thin slices or small pieces – no larger than one half inch ($\frac{1}{2}$ ”). Cut soft, round foods, like hot dogs or string cheese, into short strips rather than round pieces.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking.
- Grind up meat, chicken, and other tough foods for children under two year or cut in very small pieces).
- Encourage children to eat slowly and to chew completely before swallowing. Teach children to eat one bite at a time, and chew and swallow food before talking or laughing.
- Cook foods, such as carrots and celery, until slightly soft. Then, cut into sticks.
- Cut grapes, cherries, berries, or melon balls in half lengthwise, and then cut into smaller pieces.
- Mash or purée food until it is soft.
- Sit with children and always actively supervise them while they are eating.