

# Health Tips for Parents

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## Choking

More than 10,000 children visit emergency rooms each year from choking on food. While most of these choking events are not fatal, one child dies every five days from a food-choking accident.



“Toys are labeled for safety, but if you go to the grocery store and buy baby carrots, which you think are healthy for your toddler, you may not realize they put your child at significant risk for choking,” says Nina Shapiro, MD, director of pediatric ear, nose, and throat at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA.



The diameter of a child's airway is about the size of his or her pinky. High-risk foods can easily block airways and prevent breathing. Young children also have immature teeth and underdeveloped swallowing, which also puts them at risk for choking.

**Fortunately, choking deaths are largely preventable.**

To help ensure children's safety, never allow young children to eat unattended and only serve developmentally appropriate foods. Children should always eat sitting up and should not eat while running, playing or riding in a car.

Not all high-risk foods should be avoided. Many high-risk foods are healthy for young children — as long as they are served in the right form.

Vegetables, for instance, should always be cooked and cut into small pieces. Nut butters should be spread thinly onto crackers or bread and grapes should be peeled, halved and quartered.

### High-risk foods for children under age 5

- Hot dogs
- Nuts and seeds
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Whole grapes
- Hard or sticky candy, and lollipops
- Dried fruit
- Popcorn
- Chunks of peanut butter (or any nut butter)
- Chunks of raw vegetables
- Chewing gum



## What to do when a child chokes

- If a child is unable to breathe, call 911 and begin performing the Heimlich maneuver.
- If the child cries, coughs or vomits, the Heimlich is not necessary.
- If a child is not breathing and the object blocking the airway is visible, try to clear it.
- If the object is not visible, perform CPR until help arrives.

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