Safe from choking

"I always thought choking would have been more obvious. But the silence and the panic in his eyes will stay with me forever."

A child who's choking can't breathe, so there's no sound to alert you.
As scary as this sounds, you can stop this happening. It takes some simple steps.

Why do children choke?

- Children can choke at any age. Young children are at greater risk.
- Their narrow airways are more easily blocked.
- Anything smaller than a 2p can choke them.

Small objects

Babies and toddlers put things in their mouths. It's how they explore. So they can choke on small objects in their reach:

- Cheap toys can have small parts that come off. Check them over first.
- Use older children's toys in a specific area and check the floor afterwards. Use a tray underneath to catch small parts, like Lego.
- Don't let young children blow up balloons and clear away broken pieces.

Baby bottles

Never use a self-feeding baby pillow or prop your baby's bottle up to feed. They need an adult to help them feed.

First aid

1. Give up to five back blows between the shoulder blades – it can force the object out.
2. For babies, give up to five chest thrusts. For children over 1 year of age, give up to five abdominal thrusts squeezing above the belly button from behind – it forces air out of the lungs to clear the object.
3. If 1 & 2 don't work call 999 and keep trying until help arrives.

Food

- Choking on food isn't just about young children not chewing properly. It takes time to learn to breathe, chew and swallow in harmony.
- Until then, they need you to cut up or avoid anything that could block their airway. And to teach them to sit still to eat.

Size and shape matter

- Cut lengthways and quarters – grapes, blueberries, strawberries, cherries and small tomatoes.
- Remove skin, pips or stones from fruits or vegetables.
- Cut thin strips – sausages, cheese, vegetables and large fruit like melon, apple, carrot, cucumber and mango.
- Steam, mash or grate foods to soften them – carrots, chickpeas, butter beans.
- Cut strips and remove bones, skin or fat – meat and fish.
- Toast bread – to stop doughy balls. Cut all bread into narrow strips.

Save for later

- Round hard sweets, including mini eggs and lollipops
- Whole grapes and nuts
- Globs of peanut butter
- Popcorn
- Marshmallows
- Jelly cubes

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