

# 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

