

**Preventing Choking**  
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Now that summer is upon us, many more people will be attending cookouts and eating at the ballpark. One area we all need to think about is whether or not our children are safe from the risk of unintentional choking. Children under age 3 are at the highest risk for choking leading to death.

According to the International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology, peanuts are the most frequent cause of choking. Hotdogs were most often associated with death. Other hazardous foods were; meat, boned chicken, fish with bones, sunflower seeds, apples, chips, whole grapes, cherry tomatoes and large pieces of raw fruits and vegetables. Dr. Gary Smith, the lead author of American Academy of Pediatrics' policy statement on food hazards, states some foods should never be given to children under 4 or 5; raw carrots, marshmallows, peanuts, popcorn, hard candies and gumballs.

Pre-schoolers can choke on foods that are round and about the size of the throat, which is the size of nickel. You should always cut food into small pieces, no larger than a half inch. If you are going to feed a child a hotdog cut it lengthwise before slicing it. Grapes should be cut into quarters. Flat lollipops are safer than ball-shaped suckers. Also always spread peanut butter thinly, do not leave a glob of peanut butter. If you are not sure if a food is safe for your child to eat, err on the side of caution.

Always supervise your child when they are eating, and have them sit down to eat. Also, every parent and grandparent should be CPR certified. Please refer to the American Heart Association or American Red Cross webpages regarding CPR.

Information for this article was obtained from the USDA and the New York Times.