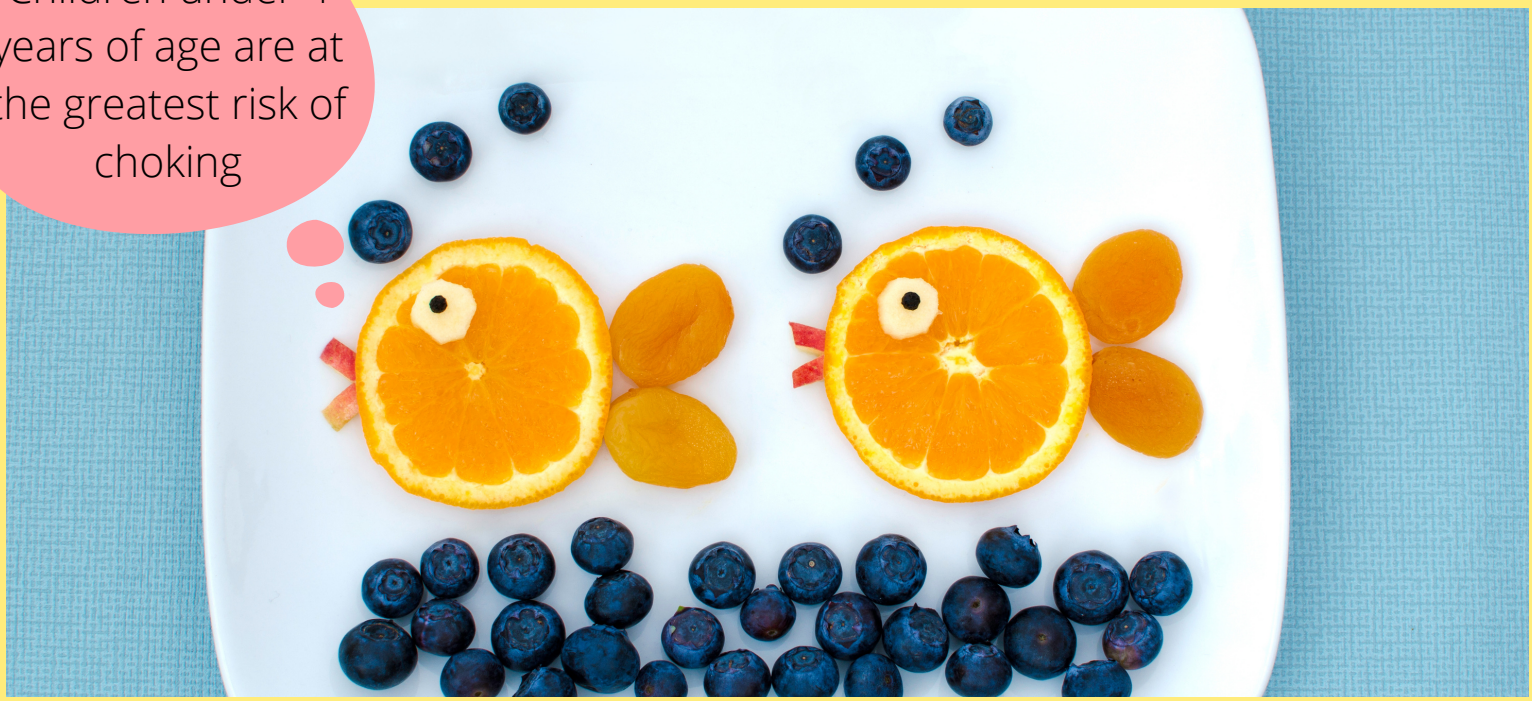
Choking Prevention & Food

A Guide for Children Under 4 Years of Age

Children under 4 years of age are at the greatest risk of choking



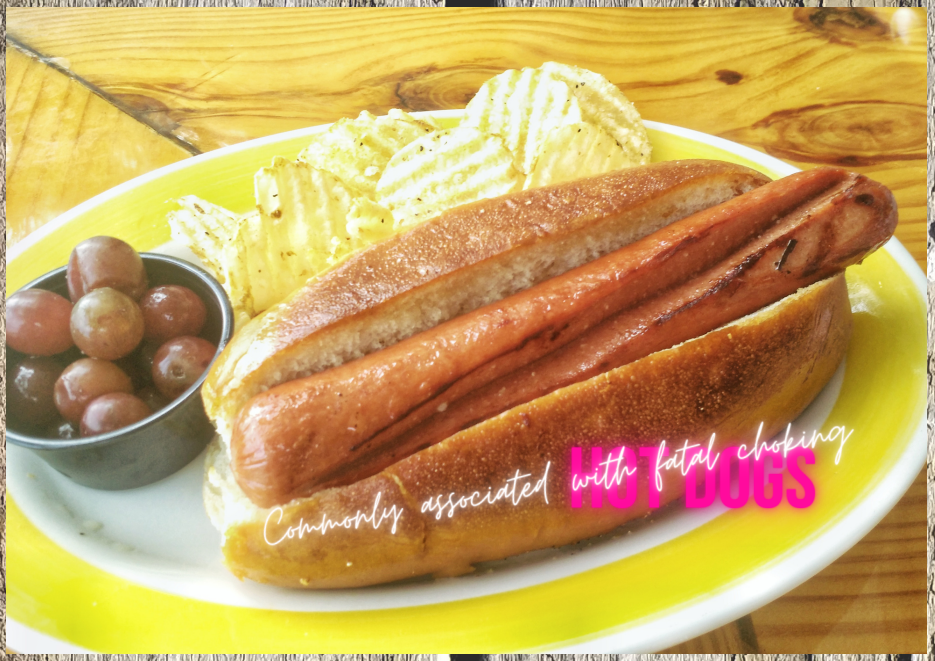
Reduce the Risk

- Cook foods until they are soft
- Cut food into thin, small slices (no larger than 1/4" for infants or 1/2" for toddlers)
  - Hot dog shaped foods should be cut into small strips rather than round pieces
  - Cut whole grapes in half, then cut again
- Do not serve meat with bones
- Grind up tough meats
- Remove seeds from fruit
- Spread creamy nut butter in a thin layer
- Do not serve foods that are as wide as a nickel

Ground Rules:

- Children should be seated upright
  - Do not serve food while a child is walking, playing, or riding in a vehicle
- Avoid distractions
- Staff must actively supervise children while eating
- Encourage children to eat slowly
- Menu items should reflect the developental abilities of the children served

Foods to Avoid



Choking Risks

- Firm, smooth, or slippery foods:
  - Whole grapes/berries, cherry tomatoes, and whole pieces of canned fruit
  - Hot dog shaped foods (This includes sausages, meat sticks, and cheese sticks)
  - Hard or round candy
- Foods that are difficult to chew and swallow:
  - Popcorn
  - Chips & pretzels
  - Raw or hard vegetables
  - Hard pieces of raw fruit
  - Nuts and seeds
- Sticky or tough foods that are difficult to remove from the airway:
  - Globs/chunks of peanut butter
  - Dried fruit
  - Tough meat
  - Marshmallows
  - Fruit snacks
  - Chewy/sticky candy and gum

Age 1 & ↓

When can I eat?

Most infants are able to eat a variety of food by the time they are 7 or 8 months of age. Developmental signs that an infant may be ready include:

- Holding their head up while seated in high chair
- Opening their mouth when food is nearby
- Closes lips around spoon and swallows successfully
- Has doubled their birth weight

PREPARATION

- Do not put food into bottle
- Cook until soft
- Puree or mash if needed
- Cut into thin, small slices (Less than 1/4")

NOW SERVING

okay

- Diced watermelon
- Quartered grapes
- Diced banana
- Scrambled eggs
- Crumbled meatballs
- Cooked peas
- Graham Crackers
- Breast Milk/Formula

*Ensure the child does not have allergies and foods are developmentally appropriate

Healthy Child Care Iowa

IDPH IOWA Department of PUBLIC HEALTH

Reference: AAP https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Choking-Prevention.aspx

HCCI 10/2020