

Safe Introduction of Foods to Young Children



Some foods commonly fed to infants and young children can be hazardous. This may be due to choking, allergic reactions or intestinal upset. The purpose of this poster is to help early childhood providers serve food safely. The recommended ages are for typically developing children. This is not a complete list of all foods to be served but focuses on potentially hazardous foods commonly offered. Feel free to call Whatcom County Health Department, Childcare Health Consultants if you have questions at 738-2508.

Encourage Safe Feeding Practices

- Always supervise eating.
- Children do best when sitting to eat.
- Join the children at the table or be within arms reach of the high chair.
- Children will imitate the adults and learn about socialization during meals.
- Decrease distractions at meal times such as T.V., games, and pets, turn off the phone for a while.
- Serve small amounts of food at a time.
- Avoid eating in cars and busses.
- Keep current on infant/child CPR and first aid practices.



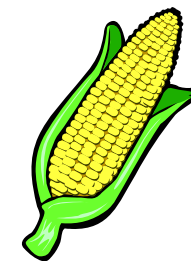
Prevent Choking Hazards

There are many reasons children choke when eating. These include:

- **Food Size** – Small pieces may become caught in child's airway. Larger pieces can completely block the throat. Infant solid pieces should be no larger than ¼". Toddler pieces no larger than ½".
- **Food Shape** – Tube shaped items are more likely to block their throat.
- **Texture** – Foods, which are firm, smooth, or slick, may slide down the throat into the airway.
- **Dry, Hard Food** – May be hard to chew and easy to swallow whole.
- **Sticky Foods** – Can stick to the back of the throat or roof of the mouth and block the throat.
- **Foods Fibrous or Tough** are very hard to chew and swallow.

Avoid Allergic Reactions

- The common allergic foods are peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, milk, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish.
- A family history of allergy should be addressed with a physician before offering these foods.
- Allergic reaction to food includes vomiting, diarrhea, rash, swelling, abdominal pain, cough, crankiness, hives, itching, runny nose, shortness of breath or wheezing.
- Symptoms can occur within minutes to a few hours of eating or contact.



Food Group	Recommended Age to Introduce			Choking Hazards						Allergic Foods	Other	Safe Alternatives/ Information
	0-12 Mos.	1-2 Yrs.	3-5 Yrs.	Size	Shape	Texture	Hard to Chew	Sticks to Back of Throat	Fibrous or Tough			
I. Protein												
Bacon		1 Yr							•			Cut in small pieces
Baked Beans/Legumes	8-12 Mos									•		Digestive issue
Breaded Chicken Strips		1 Yr									•	Not designed by companies for infants.
Egg	7 Mo Yolk Only	1 Yr Whole Egg								•		Egg whites can be highly allergic.
Fish/Breaded Fish Sticks		1 Yr								•		
Hot Dogs, Whole			4 Yr		•							If cut in small pieces, may feed at 1 Yr. Low nutritional value.
Link Sausage			4 Yr		•							If cut in small pieces, may feed at 1 Yr.
Meat Jerky	Not Recommended.						•		•		•	High salt content.
Nut Butter, thinly spread on crackers or bread		2 Yr							•			
Nut Butter alone(i.e. peanut butter, almond butter,etc.)	Not Recommended.								•			
Nuts Whole (i.e. peanuts, tree nuts, seeds)			4 Yr	•						•		
Shellfish		1 Yr								•		
Soy Solids (i.e. tofu or tempeh)	7 Mo									•		
Steak, Roast, & Other Fibrous Meats			3 Yr							•		If ground, may feed at 1-2 Yr. Cut in small pieces for 3 Yr.
II. Dairy												
Cheese – Hard Chunks			3 Yr	•								If shredded, may feed at 8 Mo.
Cheese – Tube Shaped			4 Yr		•							If shredded, may feed at 8 Mo. If cut in small bites, 1 Yr.
Processed Soft Cheese Chunks and Slices		1 Yr							•			
Whole Milk		1 Yr								•	•	Feed with cup. Digestive issues.
Soy Milk		1 Yr								•		Consult with physician first.

III. Fruits												
Banana – Whole			3 Yr		•							Cut up to feed for infants and toddlers.
Citrus Fruits (i.e. orange, pineapple, grapefruit)		1-2 Yr									•	Observe for skin sensitivity and loose stools.
Citrus Juice		1-2 Yr									•	Feed with cup. Observe for skin sensitivity and loose stools.
Grapes, Whole			3 Yr		•							If chopped or sliced may feed at 1 Yr. and up.
Fruits with Peel			3 Yr	•			•		•			Remove peel and chop into small bites. May feed at 8 Mo.
Fruit Roll Up			3 Yr				•	•				
Juice (Non-citrus – Apple, pear, grape)	6 Mo											Feed with cup.
Raisins		1-2 Yr						•				
Strawberries		1-2 Yr									•	Observe for skin sensitivity.
IV. Vegetables												
Carrots, Chunks or Raw			4 Yr	•								If shredded may feed raw at 3 Yr. Cook to soft & cut up for infants and toddlers.
Corn, Whole Kernel		1-2 Yr					•				•	Digestive issues.
Leafy Vegetables – Cooked		1-2 Yr		•		•		•				
Leafy Vegetables – Raw			3-5 Yr	•		•	•	•				
Raw Vegetables			3 Yr	•								Cook to soft and cut up for infants and toddlers.
Tomato		1-2 Yr									•	Observe for skin sensitivity.
V. Grains												
Bagels, Hard			3 Yr						•			Feed soft bagels.
Breads	8-12 Mo			•								Cut in bite size pieces until age 1.
Cereals – Ready to Eat	8-12 Mo											Avoid sugared cereals.
Cereals – Infant	4-6 Mo									•	•	Should be fortified with iron. Not to be fed mixed with formula in bottle.
Pretzels, Hard			3 Yr						•		•	Sticks of toast or soft pretzel.
Popcorn			4 Yr	•	•			•				
Toddler Biter Biscuits	Not recommended			•	•							Break off in large chunks.

Wheat	4-6 Mo									•		If family history of allergy, consult first with physician. Infants usually begin with rice, oatmeal,barley cereals.
VI. Other												
Corn Syrup		1 Yr									•	Concern with botulism.
Gum	Not recommended.											
Chewy Candy (i.e. gummy bears & gummy worms)			3 Yr						•			High sugar content, no nutritional value.
Hard Candy			4 Yr							•		Slippery, slides down throat, and blocks airway.
Highly Spiced Foods		1 Yr									•	Varies with age and family Customs
Honey		1 Yr									•	Concern with botulism.
Marshmallows			3 Yr									
Potato Chips		1 Yr		•	•	•	•	•			•	High fat/salt content. Can cut inside of mouth.
Soda Pop Powdered Drink Mix	Not recommended.											High sugar or chemical content. No nutritional value.
Tortilla Chips			3 Yr	•	•		•	•			•	High fat/salt content. Can cut inside of mouth. Substitute soft flour tortilla cut in pieces.
Whole Pickle			3 Yr		•							If chopped/sliced can feed at 2 Yrs.



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