



**COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
PRESCHOOL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
POLICY**

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SUBJECT:
PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY
APPROPRIATE FOODS TO PREVENT HEALTH RISKS
AND AVOID CHOKING

APPROVED: 10-20-10

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PURPOSE

To provide developmentally appropriate food and to minimize the risk of choking for children under the age of four.

POLICY

Each infant and toddler in center-based settings and during socialization days must receive food appropriate to his or her nutritional needs, developmental readiness and feeding skills, as recommended in the USDA meal pattern or nutrient standard menu planning requirements outlined in 7 CFR parts 210, 220, and 226.

REFERENCE

Head Start Performance Standards 1304.23(b)(1)(iv)

PROCEDURE

Choking is a preventable cause of death in young children. In children under four years, choking may be caused by small objects such as toys or balloons and certain foods. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children don't learn to chew with a grinding motion until about age 4. Until then, they simply don't have the ability to chew firm, smooth foods or large chunks of food very well.

Follow these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Red Cross, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reduce the chances of choking at mealtime.

1. Insist that your children eat at the table, or at least sitting down. Watch young children while they eat. Encourage them to eat slowly and chew their food well.
2. Mealtime conversation is encouraged, but avoids tickling, teasing, or uncontrolled laughter.
3. Some children with special health care needs may require baby foods or pureed foods and may need extra assistance at meal time.
4. Avoid serving **foods that can pose a choking hazard** that include:
 - hard or sticky candy, like whole peppermints or caramels

- nuts and seeds (don't give peanuts to children under age 7)
 - popcorn
 - spoonfuls of peanut butter
 - hotdogs/ sausage rounds
 - Whole grapes/ grape tomatoes
 - raw vegetables and fruits /uncooked dried fruit such as raisins
 - pretzels, chips, marshmallows, chewing gum
 - Chunks of meat.
5. Avoid serving **foods that can pose health risk to children younger than one year old** in center-based programs or Home Base socialization days that include:
- Honey: since it may contain a kind of botulism harmful to infants
 - Eggs: Since it is highly allergenic
 - Cow's milk: Since it is allergenic
 - Shellfish: (Shrimp, lobster, crab, crawfish, scallops, oysters, clams) since it can cause severe allergic reactions.
 - Fish: with high level of mercury(shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish)
6. Include plenty of liquids such as water, milk, or juice at meal and snack times and encourage children to sip in between mouthfuls.
7. Suggestions for caregivers to modify potentially hazardous foods to reduce the risk of choking and make them safer for children include:
- Chop, grind, or dice meats.
 - Chop nuts and grind seeds finely.
 - Dice or grate raw vegetables.
 - Steam, then slice or dice vegetables.
 - Remove the pit, and then dice fruits like cherries, apricots, and peaches.
 - Spread peanut butter thinly over crackers or wheat bread.
 - Blend peanut butter with applesauce or jam before serving.
 - Serve bow-tie pretzels instead of pretzel sticks or potato chips.
 - Remove the bones from fish or serve fish pieces that have been boned.