

Choking Accidents



What is Choking?

Choking is a foreign object that is stuck at the back of the throat and may either block the throat or induce muscular spasm. Adults may choke on food that has been inadequately chewed and/or hurriedly swallowed. Young children and babies are curious and like putting objects in their mouths. Choking requires **prompt** action and you must be prepared to resuscitate if the casualty stops breathing.

How many children have choking accidents?

- **In 1999 – 5000 children under the age of 15 were taken to hospital after choking.**
- Four out of five choking incidents happen at home.
- More than half of the 5000 children were under 5 years old.
- Choking mainly involves food and toys.

Choking Deaths.

- Asphyxia (choking, strangulation, suffocation) is the third most common cause of accidental deaths in the UK.
- In 2000, 17 children under 5 years old died and 2 children aged between 5 – 15 years died.
- 8/10 of these deaths involved food.

Preventing Choking Accidents. Food.

Young children should **always** be supervised at meal times and should

not be given sweets or any other food while playing to reduce the risk of choking on food.

Certain foods can cause particular problems. Reconstituted meat such as hot dogs or burgers can be difficult for young children to swallow. Raw vegetables can also pose a choking risk and should be cut into small strips. Boiled sweets and nuts – particularly peanuts - are also frequent causes of choking and should not be given to very young children.

Toys and Other Objects.

8% of all Choking accidents involve toys or parts of toys so it is **extremely important** to give your child a toy that is suitable for their age and not mix toys meant for babies and toddlers with those meant for older children that also live in the house.

Other small objects can also pose a choking risk. Coins are the main non-food cause of choking but batteries and buttons can also be dangerous to babies and very young children and should be kept well out of their reach.

