Assignment 8a
Preventing Choking Among Infants and Young Children

Many infants and children die each year from choking. These deaths can be prevented if parents and caregivers watch their children more closely and keep dangerous toys, foods, and household items out of their reach.

**Safety Tips: Tips for Preventing Choking**

If you are the parent or caregiver of an infant or child under 4 years old, 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**

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. Cut up foods that are firm and round and can get stuck in your child's airway, such as:

- hotdogs -always cut hotdogs length-wise and then into small pieces
- grapes-cut them into quarters
- raw vegetables-cut them into small strips or pieces that are not round
- Other foods that can pose a choking hazard 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

**During Playtime**

Follow the age recommendations on toy packages. Any toy that is small enough to fit through a 1 1/4-inch circle or is smaller than 2 1/4 inches long is unsafe for children under 4 years old.

Don't allow young children to play with toys designed for older children. Teach older children to put their toys away as soon as they finish playing so young siblings can't get them.

Frequently check under furniture and between cushions for dangerous items young children could find, including:

- coins
- marbles
- watch batteries (the ones that look like buttons)
- pen or marker caps
- cars with small rubber wheels that come off
- small balls or foam balls that can be compressed to a size small enough to fit in a child's mouth
* Never let your child play with or chew on uninflated or broken latex balloons. Many young children have died from swallowing or inhaling them.
* Don’t let your small child play on beanbag chairs made with small foam pellets. If the bag opens or rips, the child could inhale these tiny pieces.
If you’re a parent, grandparent, or other caregiver, learn how to help a choking child and how to perform CPR in case of an emergency.

**The Problem: Who Is Affected?**

More than 2,800 people die each year from choking; many of them are children. According to one study, nearly two-thirds of the children who choked to death during a 20-year period were 3 years old or younger. The majority of choking deaths are caused by toys and household items. One study found that nearly 70 percent of choking deaths among children age 3 and under were caused by toys and other products made for children. According to CDC, balloons account for 7 to 10 deaths a year. And the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has received reports of five deaths from beanbag chairs, resulting from children choking on the small foam pellets inside. The most common cause of nonfatal choking incidents is food. In one study, nearly 70 percent of choking cases presented in the emergency department were caused by foods such as hotdogs, nuts, and vegetable and fruit pieces.

**Safety Resources**

American Academy of Pediatrics The AAP offers toy safety guidelines for parents [http://www.aap.org/family/toybroc.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/toybroc.htm), which include tips for preventing choking. They also offer a fact sheet on choking prevention and first aid ([http://www.aap.org/family/choking.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/choking.htm)). AAP’s phone number is 847-228-5097.

American Red Cross The Red Cross has health and safety tip sheets, including one on toys and choking [http://www.redcross.org/healthtips/toy.html](http://www.redcross.org/healthtips/toy.html). The Red Cross can be reached at 703-248-4222.


**References**

The data and safety tips in this fact sheet were obtained from these sources:


