

# CHOKING PREVENTION

Over 500 deaths occur each year in the United States due to choking. Choking occurs when a foreign object blocks the airway, causing the inability to breathe. Choking occurs most often in children, but adults, particularly elderly and people with medical/developmental disability are at risk. Some common risk factors include inability to chew or swallow properly and poor eating or feeding skills. Because choking can happen to adults at risk, it is important for caretakers demonstrate the knowledge of types of food to serve and avoid, how to serve them. Always consult your medical team for specific choking and aspiration prevention protocol. Here are some general tips to follow.

## Helpful Tips for Choking Prevention

### Supervise at meal time. High risk clients should NEVER be left unattended.

1. Be at present to supervise, observe, encourage, and assist.
2. Follow proper texture/liquid diet order prescribed by the physician. Serve only the food that is safe for clients to chew and swallow.
3. Notify your supervisor when client is experiencing greater difficulty in eating. Further evaluation done by medical professionals may be needed.

### Proper Position

1. Ensure client is properly seated with maximum comfort and good posture
2. Avoid letting your client lean too far backward or forward.
3. If client needs assistant with feeding,

Staff is to sit at an eye level, next to the client.

4. Minimize distraction and maintain a calm environment

### Prepare foods in a way that is SOFT and MOIST which make it easier to chew and swallow

1. Avoid foods that are HARD, STRINGY, DRY, and STICKY.
2. Add sauces or gravy to meats, pasta, rice, and vegetables
3. Offer more soft fruit instead of raw hard fruit
4. Offer cooked vegetables instead of raw, crunchy vegetables.
5. Offer more ground and soft meats like chicken thigh and fish, instead of dry meats.
6. Offer more fruits smoothie instead of large chunks of fruits

### Suggested Feeding Techniques

1. Provide verbal prompts
2. Use adaptive eating tools if necessary
3. Use hand over hand technique to guide & demonstrate how to eat
4. Prompt client count after each bite ( e.g count 1-10)
5. Prompt client to put utensil down after each bite
6. Offer a small spoon to slow down the rate of eating
7. Encourage client to alternate solid and liquid between bites
8. Do not feed client too much food. Pace yourself and feeding slowly. Wait until client swallows before offering another bite.

## High Risk Foods Known to Cause Choking/Aspiration

**Hot Dogs:** They should be cut lengthwise before slicing it. Simply slicing it into nickel size chunk makes it more dangerous than no slicing it at all

**Chunks of peanut butter or other nut butter:** A large dollop of peanut butter can be hard for people to swallow at once. It can be lodged in the throat

**Large chunk of fruits, vegetables, meats & cheese:** (Carrots: To make carrots a little safer, finely shred them or cook them until they are mushy and soft.

**Popcorns:** The size and shape of the popcorn make it a very easy food to choke on.

**Hard Candies:** It is best to avoid giving clients any gum or hard candy

**Grapes:** Better cut them into halves before serving. If the grapes have seeds, make sure to remove them as well.

**Nuts & Seeds:** The size and the shapes make them more hazardous for high risk clients

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## Food Consistency Terminology

Term	How to Prepare	Size	Description	Examples
<b>Whole</b>	Prepared according to recipe	As prepared	No changes	Moist and soft cooked chicken breast
<b>1" Cut-Up Piece</b>	Cut by staff	One Inch	"Quarter-Size"	Moist and soft chicken cut into 1"
<b>½" Piece</b>	Cut by staff	Half Inch	"Dime-Size"	Moist and soft chicken cut into 1/2"
<b>¼" Piece</b>	Cut by staff	Quarter Inch	"Pea-Size"	Moist and soft chicken cut into 1/4"
<b>Ground</b>	Prepared using food processor. <b>Must be served with gravy or sauce or condiment</b>	Relish-Like, No larger than a grain of rice	"A Grain of Rice"	Moist and soft ground chicken served with low fat gravy
<b>Puree</b>	Prepared using food processor or comparable equipment	No Lumps Not Sticky, Not Pasty Not Runny	" pudding-like"	Moist, and soft cooked chicken with broth processed to smooth product with no lumps
<b>Nectar Thick Liquid</b>	Slightly thicken liquid. It leaves spoon in a fine "ribbons or trails" when poured or stirred. It resembles to syrup found in canned fruit or maple syrup or nectar juice.. It is prepared using commercial thickener.			
<b>Honey Thick Liquid</b>	This is thicker than nectar. Liquid flows slowly from spoon but still pours, like milkshake or honey. It is prepared using commercial thickener.			
<b>Pudding Thick</b>	This is thickest. It does not pour, but drops from the spoon. Like its name, it is like pudding and can be prepared using commercial thickener.			