

# Food Choking Hazards

## Legal Requirement

Although there is a heightened risk of choking on certain foods for young children or the elderly and medically vulnerable, there is currently no specific legal requirement or guidance around preventing choking from food ingredients.

## Food Ingredient Choking Risk

Certain food ingredients (although they do not all appear on our menus) pose a higher choking risk due to their size, shape and texture, e.g. spherical, ring shaped, tough or fibrous. These include (but are not limited to):

- Whole cherry tomatoes
- Whole grapes
- Sausages
- Hot dogs
- Popcorn
- Marshmallows
- Carrots (cut into rounds)

When an individual is choking, it means that an object, usually food, gets stuck in the airway which can block airflow in and out of the lungs. In most cases when this happens, a child will cough, and the item will become dislodged. Although it is uncommon, a food item may cause an obstruction and can not be removed by coughing. It is important to seek immediate medical assistance if this occurs to obtain the support required and to ensure there is no further physical damage. All incidents must also be reported on the Compass incident management system, AIR3.

## Above Unit Control Measures

It is recommended that sausages and hot dogs are removed from nursery menus. Choking incidents have been reported especially for these food because of the tough skin. The sausages also need to be cut in very small pieces to reduce the risk of choking. Culinary teams should avoid including these food items within recipes for those particular vulnerable groups. If a client is insistent on keeping these on menus, this must be documented and authorisation will be provided by the relevant sector nutrition or dietetic team. It is essential that all high risk ingredients are correctly prepared for all creche and nursery school menu plans and menus.

## In Unit Control Measures

Some of these foods can stay on menus providing that the risk of choking is reduced by cutting the food into a small enough size that would not get stuck in the windpipe. The in-unit catering team must consider the choking risk for all food served and undertake the following:

- Grapes: Cut lengthways into quarters
- Cherry tomatoes: Cut into quarters
- Carrots and firm raw salad vegetables: Cut into batons
- Cooking high risk vegetables (where possible). Although, carrots are high risk when raw and cut into the discs, the risk of choking can be reduced if cut into batons, even if served raw.
- Sausages: (If used at client request only) Follow separate additional guidance.

Individual responsibility must be confirmed and agreed where food is served / portioned by the client within a creche or nursery setting.

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Food Preparation / Food Service & Display



## References:

[Choking Hazard Safety  
\(nationwidechildrens.org\)](http://nationwidechildrens.org)

<https://www.cwt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CHEW-1-4YearsPracticalGuide3rd-Edition.pdf>

<https://ftp.iddsi.org/Documents/Complete IDDSI Framework Final 31July2019.pdf>

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>