

# Making Food Safe for Babies and Children

It's important to consider the size, shape and texture of the foods that we offer babies and young children, to reduce their risk of choking. It takes time to master the ability to chew and swallow food, and young children might not be able to cough forcefully enough to dislodge an airway obstruction. Therefore, we should take time to prepare foods so that they're safe for children under 5 to eat.

## Tips to Reduce the Risk of Choking

Ensure children sit down to eat and that you encourage them to chew their food and finish what's in their mouth, before offering more

- ✓ Avoid offering chunks of food, such as pieces of sausage, chunks of fruit & vegetables & cubes of cheese
- ✓ Instead of chunks, cut foods into narrow batons to make them safer & more manageable
- ✓ Cut round foods, such as cherry tomatoes, grapes, cherries, berries & strawberries lengthways & then into quarters
- ✓ Peel the skin off from fruits & vegetables to make them easier to chew & swallow
- ✓ Always remove hard pips & stones from fruit
- ✓ Start by softening firm fruits, vegetables & legumes, like butter beans, chickpeas & tofu, by steaming or simmering them until soft. As children become more confident eaters, you can gradually increase the firmness
- ✓ Remove all bones, skin & fat from meat & fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible
- ✓ Avoid offering chunks of cheese- instead grate or cut it into short, narrow strips
- ✓ Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts & seeds
- ✓ Do not give nut or seed butters to babies & young children by itself. Only use nut & seed butters as a spread or in cooking, for example in curries or mixed into porridge
- ✓ White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture in the throat. Try lightly toasting white bread, or use brown bread instead. Always cut bread, chapatis, naan bread & other breads into narrow strips
- ✓ Don't give whole raisins or dried fruits to babies under the age of 1 year. Always cut them into small pieces
- ✓ Avoid offering foods, such as marshmallows, raw jelly cubes, popcorn, chewing gum, boiled sweets & ice cubes/

# Suitable Finger Foods

Finger foods should be easy for babies to grip, so a good guide is to make them about the size of an adult index finger, in a stick or chip like shape. To begin with, finger foods should be soft, so it's a good idea to check they're "squishable" between your thumb and forefinger

Take a look at the images below for examples of suitable and unsuitable ways to serve finger foods

SCAN ME



## Unsuitable Suitable



## Unsuitable Suitable

