

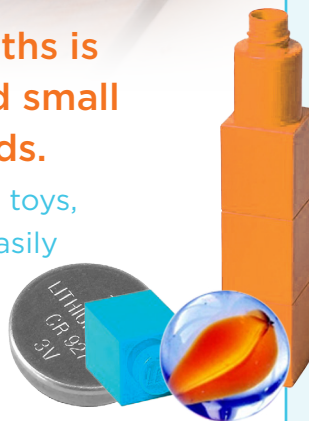


Putting things in their mouths is one of the ways babies and small children explore their worlds.

Choking is usually caused by food, toys, and other small objects that can easily lodge in a child's small airway - anything that fits can be a danger.

Food

- Encourage kids to sit when eating and to chew thoroughly. Teach them to chew and swallow their food before talking or laughing.
- Never let children run, play sports, or ride in the car with chewing gum, sweets, or lollipops in their mouths.
- Don't give children younger than four years old any hard, smooth foods that can partially or completely block the windpipe, such as:
 - nuts of any type, sunflower seeds, watermelon with seeds, cherries with pits
 - raw carrots, peas, and celery, raw apples and pears
 - popcorn, hard sweets
- Some soft foods can also cause choking and should be avoided, but can be served if chopped into small pieces or the skin is removed. Examples include cheese cubes, sausages, hot dogs and grapes.
- Be especially vigilant during adult parties, when nuts and other foods might be easily accessible to small hands. Clean up promptly and carefully, and check the floor for dropped foods that can cause choking.



Toys, Balloons, and Other Small Objects

- Generally, any toy or part of a toy that is smaller than a 35mm film canister or ping-pong ball is considered a choking hazard for children aged three and under.
- Get on your hands and knees and check the floors, under rugs, couches and within grabbing range (on shelves, in cushions, under sheets, etc.) for small parts or items that could pose a choking hazard, including:
 - Balloons, toys with small parts, doll accessories, coins, marbles, small balls
 - small office supplies (paperclips, erasers, broken crayons), nails, bolts, screws and safety pins
 - batteries, jewellery (rings, earrings)
 - small caps for bottles, including syrups and soft drinks.
- Always follow manufacturers' age recommendations when buying toys. Some toys have small parts that can cause choking, so heed all warnings on a toy's packaging.
- Make sure small refrigerator magnets are out of your child's reach.
- Check toys frequently for loose or broken parts - for example, a stuffed animal's loose eye or a broken plastic hinge.
- Warn older children not to leave loose game parts or toys with small pieces in easy reach of younger siblings.
- Safely dispose of all batteries, especially button-cell batteries (like those used for watches). Encourage children not to put pencils, crayons, or erasers in their mouths when colouring or drawing.
- Put away all breakable objects and those that are small enough to fit in small mouths.



Tips on helping a choking child

- If you can see the object, try to remove it. Don't poke blindly or repeatedly with your fingers. You could make things worse by pushing the object further in and making it harder to remove.
- If your child is coughing loudly, there's no need to do anything. Encourage them to carry on coughing and don't leave them.
- If your child's coughing is not effective (it's silent or they can't breathe in properly), shout for help immediately and decide whether they're still conscious.
- If your child is still conscious, but they're either not coughing or their coughing is not effective, use back blows (see below).

Back blows for babies under one year

- Sit down and lay your baby face down along your thighs, supporting their head with your hand.
- Give up to five sharp back blows with the heel of one hand in the middle of the back between the shoulder blades.

Back blows for children over one year

- Lay a small child face down on your lap as you would a baby.
- If this isn't possible, support your child in a forward-leaning position and give five back blows from behind.

If back blows don't relieve the choking and your baby or child is still conscious, give chest thrusts (see below) to infants under one year or abdominal thrusts (see below) to children over one year. This will create an artificial cough, increasing pressure in the chest and helping to dislodge the object.

Chest thrusts for children under one year

- Lay your baby face up along the length of your thighs.
- Find the breastbone, and place two fingers in the middle.
- Give five sharp chest thrusts (pushes), compressing the chest by about a third.

Abdominal thrusts for children over one year

- Stand or kneel behind your child. Place your arms under the child's arms and around their upper abdomen.
- Clench your fist and place it between the navel and ribs.
- Grasp this hand with your other hand and pull sharply inwards and upwards.
- Repeat up to five times.
- Make sure you don't apply pressure to the lower ribcage, as this may cause damage.

Following chest or abdominal thrusts, reassess your child

- If the object is still not dislodged and your child is still conscious, continue the sequence of back blows and either chest or abdominal thrusts.
- Call out or send for help, if you're still on your own.
- Don't leave the child.

Even if the object has come out, get medical help. Part of the object might have been left behind, or your child might have been hurt by the procedure.

Unconscious child with choking

- If a choking child is, or becomes, unconscious, put them on a firm, flat surface and shout for help.
- Call 111, putting the phone on speakerphone so your hands are free.
- Don't leave the child at any stage.
- Open the child's mouth. If the object is clearly visible and you can grasp it easily, then remove it.
- Start CPR – refer to <http://www.stjohn.org.nz/First-Aid/First-Aid-Library/Resuscitation/Child/>