Safety Fact Sheet

CHOKING PREVENTION TIPS

Did you know that around 4,700 people die each year as a result of choking? Would you be able to recognize if a family member or friend started to choke? Do you know what activities might lead to choking?


Here are some common causes of choking:

- Trying to swallow large pieces of poorly chewed food
- Drinking alcohol before or during meals; alcohol dulls the nerves that aid in swallowing
- Wearing dentures; dentures make it difficult to sense whether food is fully chewed before it is swallowed
- Eating while talking excitedly or laughing
- Eating too fast
- Walking, playing, or running with food or objects in the mouth

Follow these safety precautions to help prevent children from choking:

- Don't leave small objects, such as buttons, coins and beads within an infant's reach
- Have children sit in a high chair or at a table while they eat
- Do not let children eat too fast
- Give infants soft food that they do not need to chew
- Make sure that toys are too large to be swallowed
- Do not give infants and young children foods like nuts, grapes, popcorn or raw vegetables
- Make sure that toys have no small parts that could be pulled off
- Cut foods a child can choke on easily such as hot dogs, into small pieces
- Supervise children while they eat
- Never leave a baby to drink their bottle by themselves. They could vomit or inhale the milk and choke.
- Babies should not be given any food they cannot chew properly. Large chunks are easily breathed in.
- When preparing food, remove small bones, for example from fish or chicken.
- Don't allow your children to eat anything while lying down.
- Avoid giving children dried peas and beans to play with.
- Teach older children not to give hard biscuits, crackers or candy to a young baby or toddler.
- Foods that may partially or completely block the windpipe include raw carrots and celery, peas, nuts, sunflower seeds, cherries with pits, watermelon with seed, popcorn and hard candy.
- Such foods as hot dogs, sausages and grapes can also cause choking because they are the right shape for blocking a child's windpipe. However, these foods can be served if they are chopped into small pieces.
- Peanut butter and chewing gum can also cause choking.