Healthier Futures
Black Country Integrated Care System

Black Country Child Death Overview Panel
Learning from cases

National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) published a thematic report; NCMD-Trauma-Thematic- Report.pdf which identified in the category of choking or foreign object consumption/inhalation in England there had been 21 cases identified over a three year period (April 2019 – March 2022). For 17 children the death was as a result of choking or food inhalation. In 9 of those deaths, food was the item involved (e.g., a grape, strawberry, sausage, frozen fruit) and in 8 deaths, it was a non-food item that was involved (e.g., balls, small parts from toys, and other small plastic, metal, or fabric objects).

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) leads on raising awareness on assorted topics, including choking. CAPT has a safety hub on its website and free printed resources, including translated materials.

TOP TIPS

- **STAY –** Stay with children when they are eating – it is the biggest thing you can do for them.
- **STILL –** Get children to sit still – it can be a battle, but it is much safer.
- Cut up foods that are round, hard, chunky, doughy, or stodgy.
  - **Sausages or hot dogs** – cut into short, narrow strips lengthways as thin as possible. Removing the skin makes them easier to swallow.
  - **Meat** – cut into strips and remove any bones, skin, or fat.
  - **Fruit** – check for pips or stones and remove them.
  - **Round fruit** (grapes, blueberries, cherries, strawberries, and cherry tomatoes) – cut lengthways and then into quarters.
  - **Vegetables and larger fruit** (melon, apple, mango, carrot, and cucumber) – cut into thin strips, grate or mash, steam, or simmer.
  - **Legumes** (chickpeas and butter beans) – mash or steam to soften them.
  - **Nuts and seeds** – chop or flake (Whole nuts should not be given to under 5's)
  - **Cheese** – cut into narrow batons or strips.
  - **Bread** - Cut all types of bread into narrow strips. White bread can form a doughy ball, so brown or toasted bread is a good option.
  - **Remove skin** from fruits or vegetables to make them easier to swallow.
- **AVOID these foods –** for babies and young children
  - Popcorn
  - Marshmallows
  - Round Hard Sweets – including lollipops
  - Mini-Eggs
  - Jelly cubes
  - Peanut butter (ok to use as a spread)
  - Whole grapes

Links:

- Safe from choking | How to prevent choking in children (capt.org.uk)
- Why are grapes so dangerous? | Child Accident Prevention Trust (capt.org.uk)
- CAPT fact sheet: Breathe-Easy-Fact-Sheet-2023.pdf (capt.org.uk)

First Aid for choking:

Knowing what to do if someone is choking can give the best chance of recovery. St John's Ambulance have produced some advice and released some videos on first aid for choking:
https://www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/child-choking/
You Tube: What to Do When Someone Is Choking First Aid Training St John Ambulance:
https://youtu.be/3G_0YxMEViE?feature=shared
You Tube: What to do if Your Baby is Choking - First Aid Training - St John Ambulance:
https://youtu.be/oswDpwzbAV8?feature=shared

BLACK COUNTRY CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL