

TABLETALK



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What foods present a choking risk for young children?

Toddlers delight in feeding themselves. However, parents and childcare providers need to be cautious with young children at the table.

Foods that are hard, round or difficult to chew can sometimes lodge in small airways, causing a child to choke. To be on the safe side, consider the following advice on finger foods for children less than 3 years of age:

- Don't give hard, or difficult-to-chew-foods such as raw carrots and other crunchy vegetables, hard candy, lollipops, peanuts, and popcorn.
- Modify the shape and texture of firm foods. Cut grapes into quarters; chop apples and firm fruits into very small pieces, and cook carrots and hard vegetables until soft, then cut into small pieces.

Keep an eye on small children when they are eating. Small children may eat in a hurry, stuff too much food in their mouths, or chew their food inadequately. To avoid accidents, children should not be allowed to run or play with food while chewing. Feed small children only when they are sitting down and are in a relaxed atmosphere. Train toddlers to chew their food thoroughly before swallowing.

Best Practices at Mealtimes

Childcare providers who are good role models make mealtime and snacktime positive, cheerful, unhurried events. Providers should sit with children during meal periods, eat the same foods the children do, offer choices and give children an opportunity to serve themselves. They should also engage the children in upbeat food-related conversations, make positive comments about nutrition and encourage, but not require, children to taste all foods. Providers who force children to "clean their plate" and use food as a reward, punishment or pacifier are less likely to help children develop healthy eating behaviors. Working parents who screen day-care centers for good food and nutrition practices can

be confident their children are getting the nutrition they need and developing healthy eating habits that can help them avoid diet-related problems as they grow older.



Tips from Chef Bob

MASHED POTATO GRATIN

Ingredients: Unsalted butter for greasing casserole; 2 1/2 cups chicken broth; 4 large potatoes, peeled, finely chopped (5 cups); 1 teaspoon salt; 1/4 cup unsalted butter; 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped; 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese; salt and pepper to taste, if desired; 1/2 cup Italian style panko crispy bread crumbs.

Directions: Heat oven to 375°F. Lightly butter 2-quart casserole. Pour broth into 2-quart saucepan. Add potatoes; stir in 1 tsp salt. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat; cover and simmer about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender. Place colander over medium bowl; drain potatoes, reserving broth. Rinse and dry saucepan. In saucepan, cook 2 Tbsp of the butter and the garlic over low heat 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Return potatoes to saucepan with butter and garlic; mash with potato masher. Add 1 cup of the reserved broth to potatoes; mix until smooth. Stir in remaining 2 Tbsp butter and 1/4 cup of the cheese. Adjust seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon potato mixture into casserole. Top with remaining 1/4 cup cheese and the bread crumbs. Bake about 20 minutes or until golden brown.