

Food Safety Grab and Go Lesson

Keep Mealtimes Safe

Food safety is an important part of mealtimes with young children. Help the children learn and practice good table manners, and handle food safely. Focus on these four main areas of concern to reduce risk.

1. Wash hands and use good table manners.

Children need to wash their hands before each meal or snack. Help children remember to eat from their own plate, not another child's plate.

2. Serve meals when children are seated.

Children need to be seated when eating. Walking around while eating or drinking is not safe. A child can choke on foods and liquids, even those foods that do not normally pose a choking risk. Be observant during mealtime and help children enjoy mealtime in a relaxed manner. Children need to eat slowly enough to chew well and swallow with ease.

3. Serve family style meals the safe way.

Some benefits of family style service come from sharing a meal and talking with adults. Some states' sanitation laws require that an adult sit with the children during family style meal service. Even if your state does not require adults at the table, it is a best practice for child care.

Follow food safety and sanitation practices closely to make sure that the food is handled right and is safe to eat. Know local sanitation rules for serving



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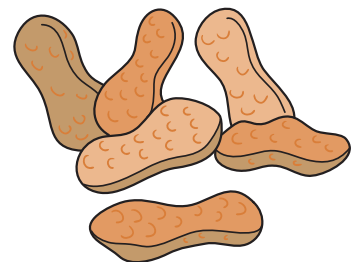
containers.

4. Do not serve foods that could cause young children to choke.

Caregivers should not offer foods that are known to increase the risk of choking incidents to children 4 years of age or under. Foods that are round, hard, small, thick and sticky, smooth, or slippery pose the greatest risk.

Foods that may be a risk for choking

- Hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds)
- Raw carrot rounds
- Whole grapes
- Hard candy
- Nuts and seeds
- Raw peas
- Hard pretzels
- Chips
- Peanuts
- Popcorn
- Marshmallows
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter
- Chunks of meat larger than can be swallowed whole



Source: *National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Second Edition* (2002). Available online from The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>.