

Choking Advice

1. If your baby is gagging– relax, stay with them and offer words of support but do not interfere– let them work it out themselves. If at any time your child stops breathing, stops making noises, or begins to choke start following the procedures listed below for choking infants.
2. If your baby is one year or over and you think they are choking perform the Heimlich Manoeuvre: Grasp your hands around your child's waist from behind. Form one hand into a fist and place it thumbside in between your child's waist and rib cage. Using your other hand thrust your fist in and up towards the rib cage.
3. If your child is under one lay them face down on your forearm with their head below their lower than their body. Using the heel of one hand give five firm back blows. If the food does not dislodge flip your baby over and give five chest thrusts*. Repeat the sequence 3 times and if the food is not dislodged call an ambulance and continue until help arrives.

*Do not go up on a chest thrust in a baby under 1.

About this Leaflet

One of the biggest concerns surrounding the Baby-Led method of weaning is that, since babies are eating whole solid food from the get go, there is a higher risk of choking. This leaflet aims to look at what choking actually is, how it is different from gagging and dispel the myth that Baby-led Weaning is more dangerous than traditional weaning. It will also provide you with useful advice and information to help you minimise the chance of your little one choking.

Visit:

<http://blwequipment.weebly.com/blog/baby-led-weaning-a-complete-guide-to-choking-gagging>

For more information and links to useful YouTube videos and free First Aid Guides


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E-mail: blwmama@gmail.com

BLW Information
Guides

BLW: A Complete Guide to Choking & Gagging

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Choking Vs Gagging

What is Choking?

Choking is when a person's airways are blocked causing the person to stop breathing and can cause death, directly related to the choking or through secondary causes such as brain failure or heart attacks. People usually choke on food but can also choke on drink or non food items such as toys.

When a choking, a child's airways are blocked so they will be silent, may change colour and will look wide eyed and very scared. They may flail their arms and legs to alert you but will not be able to make a sound.

If your child is making noises, making retching gestures or coughing and spluttering they are more likely gagging and should be left to deal with the food themselves. Choking on the other hand requires immediate attention.

What is Gagging?

Gagging is often confused with choking and tends to cause panic in new parents but this fear is not necessary. Gagging is actually totally normal and to be expected when a child begins to eat solid food. Quite the opposite of choking, gagging is the body's defence mechanism against choking.

Gagging is caused when a baby either has too much food in their mouth or if the food starts to go too far back before they have chewed and broken it down sufficiently.

Inside the mouth there is an area known as the gag reflex. When an object touches the gag reflex we gag to remove the object from our mouth and thus prevent ourselves from choking. In babies the gag reflex is much further forward than in adults, the body's way of offering extra precaution.

So, as you might expect your baby is likely to gag when you introduce solid foods as they are learning to eat, learning to chew and how to move food around their mouth and swallow.

Gagging will pass but until it does remember this is a normal part of learning to eat and it is your child's way of preventing choking. In other words it's a good thing. Gagging looks considerably different to choking. Your child will make noises-gagging noises and may look uncomfortable or annoyed more than terrified. The noises signal them moving the food around and out of their mouth. If you hear noise remember their airways cannot be blocked and so they are not choking.

Am I Putting My Baby at a Higher Risk of Choking if I do Baby Led Weaning?

- Baby Led Weaning is not for children under the age of 6 months- and that is the earliest you would start. You should really start Baby Led Weaning when your child is over 6 months *and* demonstrating all the signs of readiness. Can your baby sit unaided? Are they showing interest in your food? The risk of choking would be higher if you started your baby at 4 months but as you cannot do Baby Led Weaning with children this young then that is not an issue.
- In the old days when people weaned their babies as young as 12 weeks it makes sense that they would have to be fed purees. A 12 week old could not manage whole solid food. However, since we now know weaning should not take place until 26 weeks it is not necessary in the same way to feed purees.
- Babies can choke on many things- one of the most common causes of choking in infants is breast or formula milk. Now if a baby can choke on milk why would anyone assume that eating purees is in some way a lower risk of choking?

- Indeed many proponents of Baby Led Weaning argue that the method may *lower* the risk of choking since in Baby Led Weaning the child is in full control and can bite off pieces that are manageable to them. With traditional weaning a spoon is simply filled and put in their mouth by someone else.
- Secondly, with Baby Led Weaning, the baby learns that you have to chew food then swallow it. A baby who is weaned on purees learns only to swallow then after a few months is introduced to solid food and has to relearn how to eat to avoid choking- *Oh by the way now you have to chew then swallow*. Since a traditionally weaned baby is used to swallowing food without chewing it they may be at a higher risk of choking when they start finger food.
- Running around whilst eating is another cause of choking- again not exactly a problem for your 6 month old.
- If you examine the foods that are high choking risks you also see that Baby Led Weaning is not going to pose a higher risk than Traditional Weaning. One of the main causes of choking in children is boiled sweets. Now no one is going to offer boiled sweets as part of Baby Led Weaning!
- Baby Led Weaning is seen as a fairly newfangled method but it is really the oldest method of weaning. Baby Led

Weaning is what people in remote parts of the world do and it is what people used to do in the past -like in the days before people could buy special baby blenders and food mills! . Really the method is going back to the natural way of eating.

- And remember, even if you do Traditional Weaning you are going to be offering solid foods at some point down the line- usually around 10 months. 10 month old babies are just as much at risk of choking as 6 month old babies so unless you plan to withhold solid food forever there is no reason to not start with Baby Led Weaning and teach your baby the correct way to eat from the start!
- Do not start before your baby is ready. Ideally you should not start before 26 weeks and not until your child can sit unaided

High Risk Choking Foods

- * Boiled Sweets
- * Crackers (if lots consumed at once)
- * Formula or Breast Milk
- * Hotdogs
- * Whole Nuts
- * Grapes and Cherry Tomatoes
- * Hard Fruit and Veggies
- * Pretzels and Popcorn
- * Bones (found in fish etc)

How Can I Minimise the Risk of Choking?

- Do not offer purees first then start Baby Led Weaning
- Feed your baby with the TV off and no distractions
- Ensure your baby is seated, ideally at the table or in a high chair for meals
- Cut food so it is not able to act like a plug- chop grapes and cherry tomatoes in half- cut sausages in half length ways so they are more like spears than tubes etc
- Don't cut food up into little pieces as they are more likely to accidentally be inhaled back or get lodged. Think a large chip or wedge size
- To start with avoid hard fruits and veggies by steaming or roasting them- steam apple slices don't give them raw for instance
- Don't offer them boiled sweets- just don't
- Whole Nuts and popcorn are also high choking risks and should be avoided until your child is five.
- Do a First Aid Course or refresh your First Aid knowledge
- Go through the basics covered in this article with anyone who is going to be looking after or feeding your child.