Playgroup Choking Safety Guidelines

Putting things in their mouths is one of the ways that babies and small children explore their worlds. Choking is usually caused by food, toys, and other small objects that can easily lodge in a child's small airway — anything that fits can be a danger.

Pay special attention to the following to protect children from choking:

**Food**

- Children at playgroup need to sit when eating and to chew thoroughly. Use snack time as a teachable moment to talk to children about chewing and swallowing their food before talking or laughing.

- Be especially vigilant when you have crafts or sensory materials that include beans, caps to markers or other small pieces. An adult must supervise these activities at all times. Clean up promptly and carefully and check the floor for dropped foods that can cause choking.

- Children should not be playing at the site with gum, candy, or lollipops in their mouths.

- Be sure to read all manufacturers' food labels carefully when purchasing for playgroup to determine choking risks.

- Don’t give kids younger than 4 years old any hard, smooth foods that can partially or completely block the windpipe, such as:
  - nuts or seeds of any type
  - cherries with pits
  - raw carrots, peas, and celery (partially steamed vegetables are a good replacement)
  - popcorn
  - hard candy
  - large slices of raw apples and pears (cut into thin strips or grate if serving)

Encourage parents and caregivers to supervise the eating area to ensure that children are safe.

- Some soft foods also can cause choking and should be avoided:
  - hot dogs
o sausages
o grapes

These soft foods, can be served if they’re chopped into small pieces or peeled if they have skin. Spoonfuls of peanut butter should be regarded as potential choking hazards.

Toys, Balloons, and Other Small Objects

- Get on your hands and knees and check the floors, under rugs, and within grabbing range (on shelves, in cushions, under sheets, etc.) for small parts or items that could pose a choking hazard, including:
  - balloons
  - toys with small parts and doll accessories
  - coins
  - safety pins
  - small office supplies (paperclips, tacks, etc.)
  - marbles and small balls
  - nails, bolts, and screws
  - erasers
  - batteries
  - broken crayons
  - jewelry (rings, earrings, pins, etc.)
  - small caps for bottles

- Always follow all manufacturers’ age recommendations when buying toys. Some toys have small parts that can cause choking, so heed all warnings on a toy’s packaging.

- Check toys often for loose or broken parts — for example, a stuffed animal’s loose eye, buttons or a broken plastic hinge.

- Encourage kids not to put pencils, crayons, or erasers in their mouths when coloring or drawing.

- Put away all breakable objects and those that are small enough to fit in small mouths.