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## Prevention of Paediatric Inhaled Foreign Body

### Who is this information for?

This information is for patients, families and carers of children over the age of 6 months, to help prevent inhaled foreign bodies in these children.

### What amount of foreign bodies occur in children?

Approximately 80% of foreign body airway foreign body episodes occur in children, and 75% occur in children under 3 years of age.

### Why are infants at greater risk of choking with foreign bodies?

- At 6 months of age, children begin to develop the fine motor dexterity to pick up small objects and put them into their mouths
- By 1-2 years of age, they like to explore their world by putting objects in their mouths, and they are able to stand, reach and walk around
- Chewing abilities remain relatively immature throughout early childhood

### What are some of the additional risk factors that children could be at risk of inhaling foreign bodies?

- Access to inappropriate foods or objects
- Activity whilst eating
- Older siblings who may place food or foreign objects into the child's mouth

### What groups are at particular risk of inhaling foreign bodies?

- Children with developmental delay
- Children with neurological disorders
- Children with anatomical abnormalities of the upper airway

### What are the common symptoms of a child who has inhaled a foreign body?

- Coughing, choking, wheezing and possibly vomiting
- Unexplained shortness of breath and possible fever
- Potential progression to unconsciousness and cardiorespiratory arrest

### How can parents and carers best prevent inhalation of foreign bodies?

#### Foods:

- Hard and/or round foods should not be offered to children younger than four years of age
- These include, but are not limited to:
  - hot dogs, sausages, chunks of meat
  - grapes, raisins, apple chunks
  - nuts, peanuts, popcorn, watermelon seeds, raw carrots
  - hard candy, marshmallows, chewing gum, popcorn
- Infants should be fed solid food only by adults, and only when the infant is sitting upright
- All meals for young children should be supervised by an adult
- Children should be taught to chew their food well; shouting, talking, playing, running, crying, and laughing while eating should be discouraged

#### Medications:

- Chewable medications should be given only above three years of age (when molar teeth are present)

#### Other Objects:

- Avoid small objects including:
  - marbles, ball bearings
  - small rubber balls
  - latex balloons
- Coins and other small items should not be given to young children as rewards
- The practice of using the mouth to hold school supplies or other small objects should be discouraged
- Avoid toys with small parts, and keep other small household items out of reach
- Follow the age recommendations on toy packages

Be aware of older children's actions. They may give younger siblings small or dangerous objects.

Parents, teachers, child care providers and others who care for children should be encouraged to take a course in Basic Life Support and choking first aid

### Concerns or questions?

You can contact your ENT Specialist at the Melbourne ENT Group (MEG):

- Phone: 1300- 952-808
- Email: [admin@melbentgroup.com.au](mailto:admin@melbentgroup.com.au)
- Website: [www.melbentgroup.com.au](http://www.melbentgroup.com.au)



Your GP is also the best contact for ongoing care and concerns.

