

TECHNICAL FOOD PREPARATION GUIDE

Reducing the risk of choking for tamariki

Why preparation matters

Young tamariki are still learning to chew and swallow safely. Their airways are small, and their eating skills are developing, so even healthy kai can be risky if it's not prepared the right way.



SMALL, HARD FOODS

Examples: Raw Carrot, Apple, Pear

- Grate, spiralise, or thinly slice hard foods.
- Or, cook until soft and cut into strips.
- Remove skins, which can be hard to chew and may block airways.



SMALL OR ROUNDED FOODS

Examples: Grapes, Berries, Peas, Cherry Tomatoes

- Quarter or finely chop rounded foods.
- For tamariki aged 1–3 years, cook and mash peas with a fork.



COMPRESSED FOODS

Examples: Chicken,

- These can mould to the shape of the airway and get stuck.
- Cook until very tender, then mince, shred, or finely chop.



FIBROUS OR STRINGY FOODS

Examples: Celery, Pineapple

- Pull off tough fibres where possible.
- Slice finely across the grain for easier chewing.



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SKINS, SEEDS, AND STONES

Examples: Cherries, Apples, Grapes

- Remove all skins, pips, and stones before serving.
- Skins and seeds can stick in the throat or block airflow



THICK PASTES

Examples: Peanut Butter

- Spread thinly on bread or crackers
- Avoid large spoonfuls – thick pastes can stick to the throat

TOP 10 HIGH-RISK FOODS

Avoid serving these to young tamariki under 5 years:

1. Whole or chopped nuts
2. Large seeds (pumpkin, sunflower)
3. Hard or chewy lollies
4. Crisps, corn chips, chippies
5. Hard rice crackers
6. Dried fruit (especially large or sticky pieces)
7. Sausages, saveloys and cheerios
8. Popcorn
9. Marshmallows
10. Hard chunks of meat or cheese



EXTRA SAFETY TIPS

- Always supervise tamariki while eating
- Encourage tamariki to sit while eating
- Avoid rushed meal times: calm, slow eating reduces the risk
- Regularly check for food changes as tamariki grow and eating skills develop

