

Food Supervision Procedure

To minimize the risk of children choking while eating teachers will ensure:

- children are seated and supervised, by a teacher with a current first aid certificate, while eating
- food provided by the Centre is prepared in accordance with the Ministry of Health guidance
- parents are provided with a copy of the Ministry of Health guidance so they are informed of the requirements
- food choices provided by the Centre meet the nutritional and developmental needs of each child
- parents are aware of the importance of providing food that meets the nutritional and developmental needs of each child

If a child brings in their lunch box, food that is not acceptable, under the Ministry of Health guidance or food that needs to be altered, to meet the Ministry of Health guidance, Little Magpies teachers may choose not to alter the food supplied however they will closely supervise the children while eating the food. Teachers will however remind families of the requirements and encourage them to follow the guidance recommended by Ministry of Health.

If a child chokes while eating the supervising teacher will use their first aid skills to help the child and attempt to remove the food causing the choking and the parents will be phoned.

We encourage our families to follow the Ministry of Health guidelines as suggested by the Ministry of Education.

High Risk Food to Exclude

Exclude the following foods, as per the Ministry of Health guidance. They have the highest risk of choking on, and are either not practical to alter, have no or minimal nutritional value, or both:

- whole or pieces of nuts
- large seeds, like pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- hard or chewy sweets or lollies
- crisps or chippies
- hard rice crackers
- dried fruit
- sausages, saveloys and cheerios
- popcorn
- marshmallows

For more information see the Well Child/Tamariki Ora Programme Practitioner Handbook available on the Ministry of Health website (www.health.govt.nz).

How to alter high-risk food to lower its choking risk

Food characteristics	Examples	Choking risk	Changes to reduce risk	
			1–3 years old	4–6 years old
Small hard food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pieces of raw carrot, apple or celery 	<p>Difficult for young children to bite through and break down enough to swallow safely. Pieces can become stuck in children’s airways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. Cook until soft² and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare as for 1–3 years. Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (approximately 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
Small round or oval food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit with stones and large seeds or large pips like watermelon Grapes, large berries, cherry tomatoes Raw green peas 	<p>Small round foods can lodge in children’s airways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove stones and large seeds or large pips. Quarter or finely chop grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller (about half the width of a standard dinner fork). Cook and squash with a fork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halve or quarter grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes Whole cooked green peas are acceptable.
Food with skin or leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove skin from chicken. Finely slice or chop salad leaves, spinach and cabbage. 	

² ‘Soft’ means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.

Food characteristics	Examples	Choking risk	Changes to reduce risk	
			1–3 years old	4–6 years old
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lettuce and other raw salad leaves, spinach, cabbage • Stone fruit (eg, plums, peaches, nectarines) • Apples and pears • Tomatoes 	Food skins are difficult to chew and can completely seal children’s airways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grate raw carrot, apple or celery, spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals, slice thinly using a mandolin. • Cook until soft³ and cut into strips (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as for 1–3 years. • Raw or cooked vegetables or fruit cut into sticks (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
Compressible foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pieces of cooked meat 	Can fit into the shape of the airway and get wedged tightly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook meat until very tender. • Choose mince, shred or chop meat to 8mm x 8mm sized pieces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as for 1–3 years; or offer thin strips of meat (around 4–6 cm long) that can be picked up with one hand or with a fork.
Food with bones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish • Chicken nibbles 	Small bones present a choking risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove all bones. 	
Thick pastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nut or seed butter 	Can fit to the shape of a child’s airway or stick to side of airway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use smooth thick pastes sparingly, spreading thinly and evenly onto bread. 	
Fibrous or stringy food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw pineapple 	Fibres make it difficult for children to break up the food into smaller pieces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peel the skin or strong fibres off where possible. • Slice these foods thinly across the grain of fibres. 	

³ 'Soft' means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.