

Preventing Choking, Suffocation & Drowning

*Advice for households with
Children Under 5*

Children, particularly those under five, often put objects in their mouth which is a normal part of how they explore the world.

However, some small objects or food items (smaller than a 50p coin for example) can be just the right size to get stuck in a child's airway and cause choking.

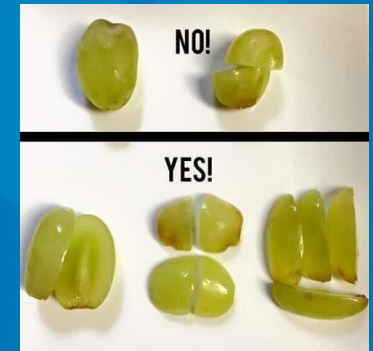
Look out for Choking hazards around the home including:

- Grapes
- **Cherry tomatoes**
- Cocktail sausages
- **Whole nuts**
- Lollipops
- **Sweets** (such as marshmallows and hard boiled sweets)
- Marbles
- **Coins**
- Balloons
- **Small toys**



Follow these steps to help reduce the risk of choking.

- Make sure food is cut into small pieces and stones and pips are removed from fruits.
- **Keep small items out of the reach of children.**
- Make sure your child plays only with toys appropriate for their age and stage of development to reduce the risk of choking.



- **Be aware that older children may share unsuitable objects with younger siblings.**
- **Throw away broken toys.**
- **Never place hair bands, clips or hair ties on babies.**
- **Do not put jewellery of any kind on a child under three years of age.**

Magnets are a choking hazard but can cause other injuries too

Newry boy has part of gut removed after swallowing magnets

By Lesley-Anne McKeown
BBC News NI

© 11 August 2020



The tiny magnets can cause erosions and holes in the bowel

BBC News
11/08/21

Belfast schoolboy suffers bowel damage after swallowing magnetic fidget balls linked to TikTok 'piercing' craze



Nine-year-old Preston Adlam, from the Shankill Road area of Belfast, had to undergo bowel surgery on Sunday night after he accidentally swallowed three small, magnetic fidget balls while trying to copy a new TikTok craze

Irish News
22/09/21

Likewise, Button Cell Batteries are a choking hazard but can also cause internal injuries if swallowed.



**What
you
see**



**What
a 3-year-old
sees**

So what should I do?

- Look around the home for items that may contain small Magnets and Button Cell Batteries and keep them out of sight and reach
- **When buying toys make sure they are age appropriate and have a CE or equivalent safety mark.**
- Ensure items that use button batteries have secure battery compartment covers.

NI Direct has a video that shows what to do if a child is choking: nidirect.gov.uk/articles/choking

If your child is choking:

- If they are coughing after swallowing an item, encourage them to carry on coughing to bring up what they're choking on. Do not leave your child alone.
- If your child's coughing isn't effective, it's silent, they can't breathe in properly or speak, or are unconscious call for help immediately on **999**.

- **If a choking child is or becomes unconscious put them on a firm, flat surface and shout for help.**
 - Call **999** and put your phone on speakerphone so your hands are free.
 - **Do not leave the child.**
 - Open the child's mouth and if you can see the object, remove it.
 - **Do not put fingers into the mouth to feel for the object.**
 - Start CPR until help arrives.

Preventing Suffocation

Babies naturally grasp things and bring things to their face so we need to be alert to suffocation hazards.

- **Nappy Sacks are made of flimsy plastic and can cling to a baby's face or obstruct the airway if placed in or over their mouth.**



- Store Plastic Bags up out of reach of children.
- Tie plastic bags in a knot so that if a child did get hold of it then it would be harder to pull over their head.
- Keep cots free from clutter like soft toys, cot bumpers and soft, pliable bedding. These can mould around a baby's face and lead to suffocation.
- Choose a cot that meets the British safety standard (BSEN716) as it will have been designed to reduce the number of accidental deaths due to suffocation and strangulation.

Preventing Drowning

A small child can drown in as little as 3 cm of water!

- Beware of ponds and other containers that can collect water such as paddling pools, sand pits and buckets. Restrict access with fencing and do not leave things (e.g. buckets) around that water can collect in.
- Always supervise bath time. Be careful with bath seats – these can tip over and, if unattended, the baby will not be able to lift themselves out of the water.



Can the Council can help?

We provide home safety checks for households with a child under 5 where we can give tailored information and advice about home safety.

If eligible, useful home safety items/gadgets can be provide free of charge.

**To self refer or to refer on someone's
behalf please contact us on:**

028 9034 0160

envhealth@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk