

Horden Nursery School Safer Eating Advice



This information has been taken from the Department of Education Safer Eating and Food Safety Guidelines

Why is food safety so important for young children?

Children can choke at any age. However, younger children are at greater risk as their narrow airways are more easily blocked.

Babies' and young children's immune systems are not as strong and developed as adults'. This means they are more vulnerable to infections which can lead to food poisoning. It is important to take extra care with hygiene and preparing food safely.

Food safety advice for children age 5 and under

How to reduce the risk of choking

Children can choke on any food. To minimise the risk of choking:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods (like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes) lengthways and **into quarters**
- cut large fruits (like melon) and hard fruit or vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) **into slices instead of small chunks**
- do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months (they can be chopped up as part of a meal)
- soften hard fruit and vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months
- cut sausages **into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins** (sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content)
- remove bones from meat or fish
- do not give whole nuts to children under five years old
- do not give whole seeds to children under five years old
- cut cheese into **strips rather than chunks**
- consider wholemeal or toasted bread as white bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, and cut all types of bread into strips for very young children
- do not give children popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet, either to eat or as part of messy play activities, as they can get stuck in the throat
- do not give children hard sweets

Food and drinks to avoid

Drinks

Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink. Fruit juice, smoothies, squash, fizzy drinks and flavoured milk, even when diluted, contain lots of sugar and can cause tooth decay. Diet or reduced-sugar drinks are not recommended for babies and toddlers either. These drinks can fill older children up so they're not hungry for healthier food.

Unsweetened, calcium-fortified plant-based drinks (such as soya, oat and almond drinks) can be given from 12 months as part of a healthy balanced diet. They should be avoided before 12 months, although small amounts can be used in cooking.

Do not give children under 5 rice drinks because of the level of arsenic they contain.

Foods to avoid up to 5 years

Children under the age of 5 should not be given:

- whole nuts and peanuts as they pose a choking risk (children can be given crushed or ground nuts and smooth peanut butter from around 6 months old)
- raw eggs, runny boiled eggs or foods containing partially cooked eggs like uncooked cake mixture (unless they have the red lion stamp or you see the words “British Lion quality”)
- foods high in salt such as sausages, bacon, crackers, crisps, ready meals and takeaways
- sugar, either in sugary snacks or added to food
- foods high in saturated fat such as biscuits, crisps and cakes
- fresh pate (meat, fish or vegetable-based) to reduce the risk of food poisoning
- unpasteurised milk, milk drinks and cheese, mould-ripened cheeses and soft blue-veined cheese, to reduce the risk of food poisoning (these cheeses can be used as part of a cooked recipe as listeria is killed by cooking)
- shark, swordfish and marlin, as the levels of mercury in these fish can affect a child’s developing nervous system
- raw shellfish, to reduce the risk of food poisoning - make sure any shellfish you use is thoroughly cooked.
- raw jelly cubes, as these are a choking hazard
- slush ice drinks, sometimes known as slushies, as they may contain too much glycerol

Foods to serve occasionally from 6 months to 4 years

Although it is recommended to provide oily fish at least once every 3 weeks, do not provide it more than twice a week, as it can contain low levels of pollutants.