

### Fruit with skin

For example:



### Choking risk

Fruit skins are difficult to chew and can completely seal children's airways.

### Fibrous or stringy food

For example, pieces of:



### Choking risk

Fibres make it difficult for children to break up the food into smaller pieces.

### Options for tamariki of all ages:

- Remove the stone and chop to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller (about half the width of a standard dinner fork).
- Grate raw apple or pear, **or** slice thinly using a mandolin or vegetable peeler.
- Cook until soft<sup>3</sup> and cut into strips (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
- Finely chop tomato to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller.

### For tamariki aged 4–6 years you can also:

- Cut raw fruit into sticks (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.

### Options for tamariki of all ages:

- Peel the skin or strong fibres off where possible; **and**
- Slice these foods thinly across the grain of fibres.

### Compressible foods

For example:



### Choking risk

Can fit into the shape of the airway and get wedged tightly.

### Food with bones

For example:



### Choking risk

Small bones present a choking risk.

### Options for tamariki of all ages:

- Mince, shred or chop meat to 8mm x 8mm sized pieces; **and**
- Cook meat until very tender.

### For tamariki aged 4–6 years you can also:

- Offer thin strips of meat (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand or with a fork.

# Reducing food-related choking for babies and young children at early learning services

March 2021





3. 'Soft' means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue. Tinned fruit (in natural juice and drained) is acceptable.

## Providing appropriate food

Research shows that some food poses a greater risk of choking on. To reduce the risk, early learning services should not provide high-risk foods and change the texture or size and shape of others.

### High-risk food to exclude

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

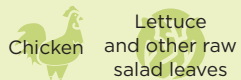
-  whole nuts or pieces of nuts
-  large seeds, like pumpkin or sunflower seeds
-  hard or chewy sweets or lollies
-  crisps or chippies and corn chips
-  hard rice crackers
-  dried fruit
-  sausages, saveloys and cheerios
-  popcorn
-  marshmallows.

### High-risk food to alter

Foods to alter, why and how to do it for different age groups<sup>1</sup>.

#### Food with skin or leaves

For example:



#### Choking risk

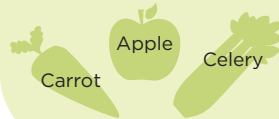
Food skins and leaves are difficult to chew and can completely seal children's airways.

#### Options for tamariki of all ages:

- Remove skin from chicken.
- Finely slice or chop salad leaves, lettuce, spinach and cabbage.

#### Small hard food

For example, pieces of raw:



#### Choking risk

Difficult for young children to bite through and break down enough to swallow safely. Pieces can become stuck in children's airways.

#### Options for tamariki of all ages:

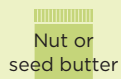
- Grate raw carrot, apple or celery; **or**
- Spiralise to create vegetable or fruit spirals; **or**
- Slice thinly using a mandolin or vegetable peeler; **or**
- Cook until soft<sup>2</sup> and cut into strips (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.

#### For tamariki aged 4–6 years you can also:

- Cut raw vegetables or fruit into sticks (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.

#### Thick pastes

For example:



#### Choking risk

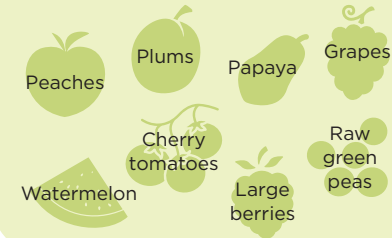
Can fit to the shape of a child's airway or stick to side of airway.

#### For tamariki of all ages:

- Use smooth thick pastes sparingly, spreading thinly and evenly onto bread.

#### Small round or oval food

Small round fruit and vegetables, and fruit with stones and large seeds or large pips, for example:



#### Choking risk

Small round foods can lodge in children's airways.

#### Options for tamariki of all ages:

- Remove the stone and chop to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller (about half the width of a standard dinner fork).
- Remove large seeds or large pips.
- Quarter or finely chop grapes, large berries and cherry tomatoes to an 8mm x 8mm size or smaller.
- Cook raw or frozen green peas and squash with a fork.

#### For tamariki aged 4–6 years you can also:

- Cut into sticks (around 4–6cm long) that can be picked up with one hand.
- Halve or quarter grapes, large berries and cherry tomatoes.
- Whole cooked green peas are acceptable.

1. This advice is for children aged 1–6 years of age.  
 2. 'Soft' means the food can be easily squashed between your thumb and forefinger, or on the roof of your mouth with your tongue.