

choking awareness !



Information
book to
help raise
awareness
of choking



choking awareness

We hope you enjoy this booklet which is designed to give you information about choking.

You can go through this booklet in sections and repeat as many times as necessary.

We hope that this booklet will boost your confidence and help reduce your risk of choking.



This choking awareness booklet was developed by John Toal and Angela Crocker Lead Clinical Speech and Language Therapist. A special thanks to everyone who participated especially the members and staff from the Everton centre, Mark Lee Community nurse, Philip O'Neill medical photography and Sheila Jamieson CRIS design. The choking awareness project has been supported by the PHA and BHSC Health Improvement Consortium. © 2014 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust all rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of BHSC enquiries@innovations.hscni.net

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Choking is when food sticks in your throat.
You might cough or not be able to cough, speak or breath.

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If you can't breathe you could collapse and you could die.

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Change what you eat

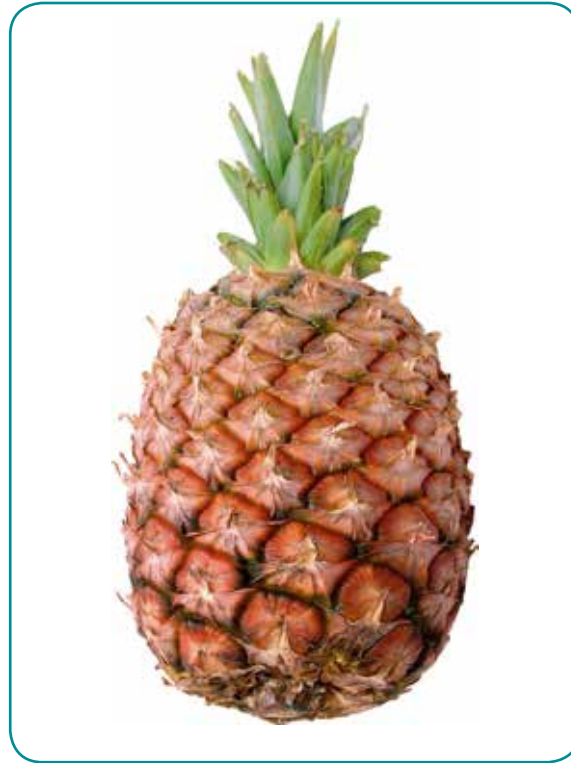
Avoiding high risk foods can help reduce your risk of choking

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Round and long shaped foods are high risk because of their shape.
Remove the tough skin.
Cut lengthways to change shape.

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Some foods are **stringy** like green beans, pineapple and celery.

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Some foods are high risk because they need a lot of **chewing** like
bacon, steak and chewy sweets.

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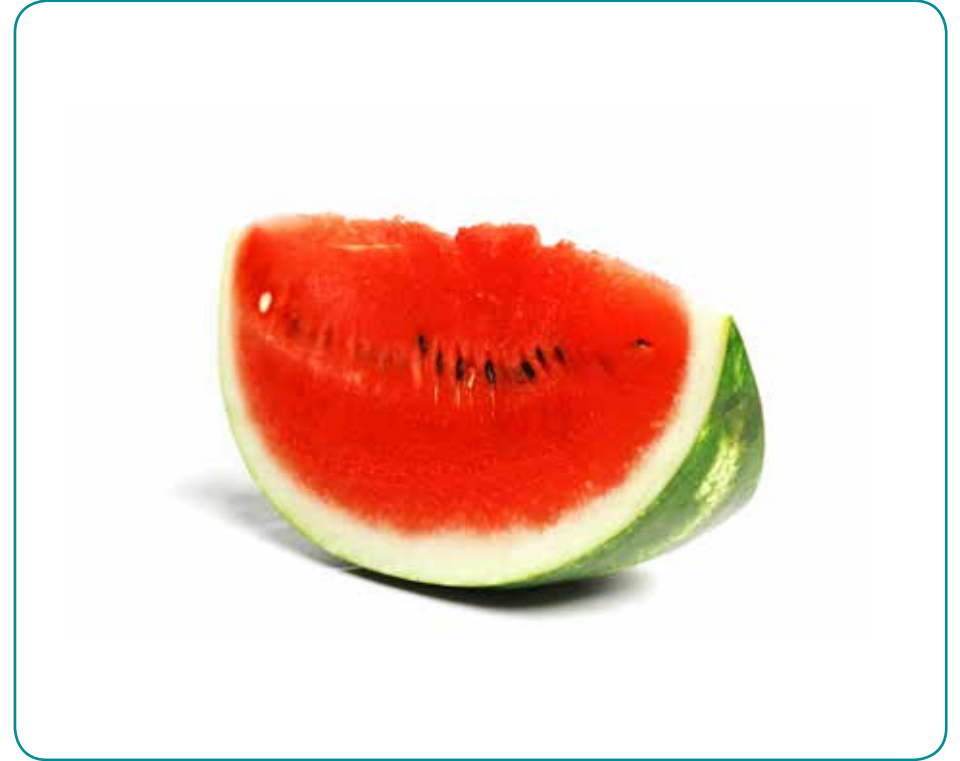
Cake, biscuits and some bread like wheaten can be **crumbly**.
A crumb can go back in the mouth causing choking.

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Pastry and buns can be **flaky**.
Flakes can go back in the mouth causing choking.

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Solid food mixed with liquid, like hard cereal with milk and food where juice comes out of the food, like melon can be hard to eat. As you have to deal with the liquid and the solid food separately.

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Skin, bones, fat and gristle can be hard to chew and can stick in your throat. Remove before you eat.

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Sticky foods, like marshmallows and some cheeses can be hard to eat as they require good chewing and can stick to the teeth.

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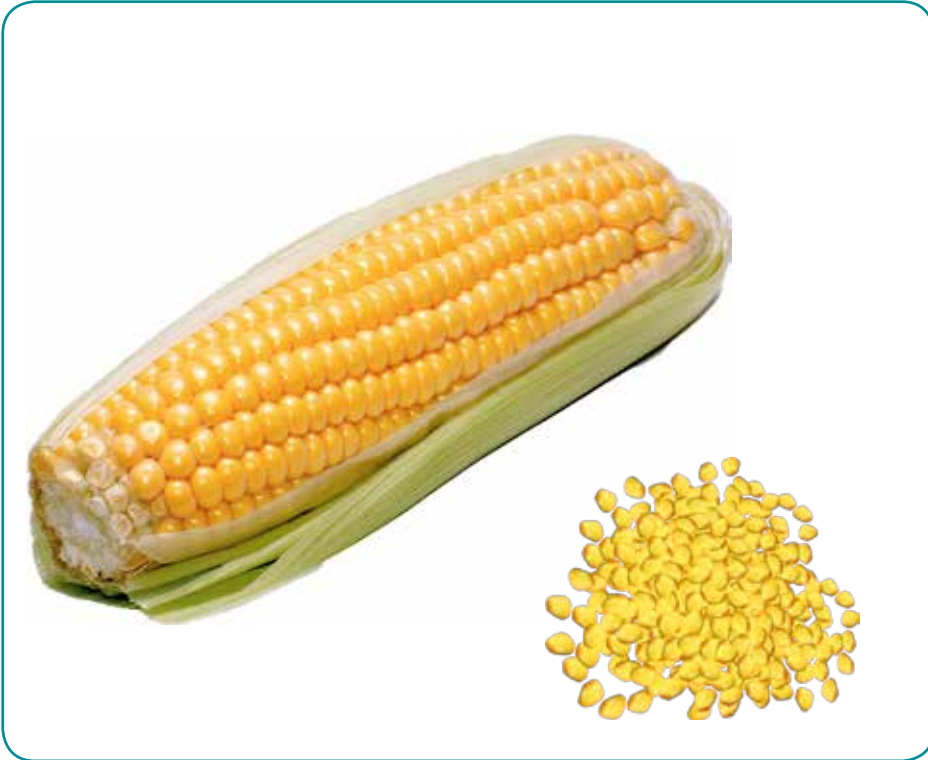
Boiled sweets and nuts are difficult to eat because they are **hard** to chew and if swallowed whole can block the airway.

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Crunchy foods like raw vegetables and some fruit can break into hard pieces. A hard piece can go back in the throat causing a choking risk.
Cook fruit and vegetables to soften.

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Some foods have a tough hard **skin** or husk like corn and beans. The skin can be hard to chew and may be swallowed whole cause a choking risk.

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Crisps can shatter into sharp pieces. Your mouth has to work hard to break up and gather all the pieces to soften them before swallowing. If a sharp piece of crisp goes back early it can stick in the throat causing a choking risk. Corn snacks can be a soft option.

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Wet lettuce or spinach can be **floppy** and flop over an open airway causing choking.

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Doughy bread can be a chewy texture and form a sticky ball which can be difficult to clear.

Crusty bread can be **dry** and hard to chew.

Some bread contains seeds and grains.

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A softer option could be thin sliced bread with the crusts removed, well buttered and cut up into small bite size pieces.

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Change the way you eat

Learning ways to eat safe can help reduce your risk of choking

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Cut up some foods to make them easier to eat.
It is important not to put big pieces of food into your mouth
and overfill it.

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Try to keep quiet when you are eating.
Do not laugh or talk when eating.

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Slow down and take your time
Make sure you have plenty of time to eat.
Try not to eat fast. Do not rush your food to go somewhere.

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Eat one small bite at a time.
Do not put too much in your mouth.

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Dry foods are hard to eat.
Add a sauce to make some foods moist and easier to chew.

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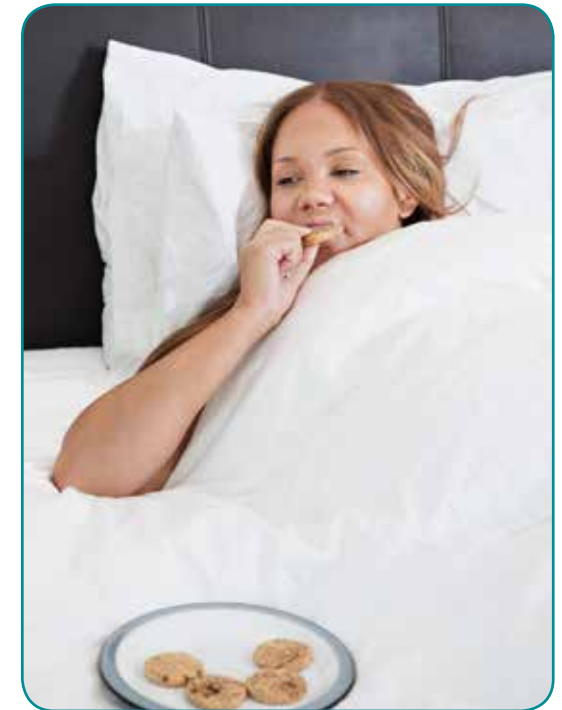
Eat slowly and chew, put your fork down to help you slow down.
Finish one mouthful before putting in more food.

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Stop and take a sip of drink every few mouthfuls to help wash down food.

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Sit down when you eat.
Do not walk around or lie down while eating.

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Change where you eat
Adopt a safe eating environment

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It is important to reduce noise.
Turn off the TV and Radio.

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Try to be calm and concentrate on eating.
Do not fidget or try to doing other things while you eat.
No mobile phones.

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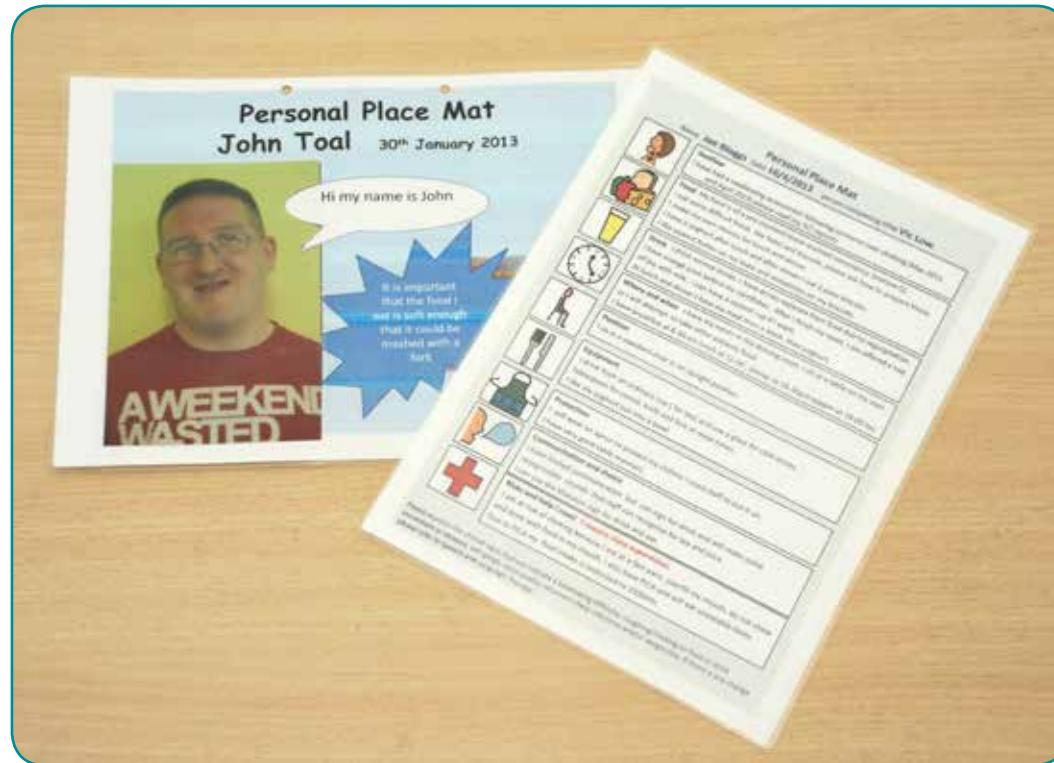
It is a good idea to eat with other people.
Try to eat with people who know how to help you if you choke.
Never leave a room if you start to cough and choke.

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Other good ideas
that can help reduce your risk of choking

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A Personal Place Mat can help you tell other people about your risk of choking.

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If you have communication support needs use a communication tool to help you think about your eating and understand your risk of choking.

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It can be hard to change what you eat.
You may need support to make good choices.
Some people with a learning disability find it hard to make decisions
and may need protection.

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People with learning disability often have bad teeth which can make it hard or painful to chew food. It is important that you look after your mouth and visit the dentist regularly.

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Everyone needs to know how to help someone if they choke.
They need to have first aid training.

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If you are worried about choking or have any problems eating, drinking or swallowing, you can be referred for a swallowing assessment from Speech and Language Therapy.