

# Preventing Choking

It is every parent's nightmare: the possibility of seeing your child struggle to breathe as he or she is choking. Children of any age can choke on food, but children under 4 years are more at risk because they put small objects into their mouths and are still learning to chew. You can help prevent your child from choking by offering the right kinds of foods and watching out for choking hazards.

## What is Choking?

Choking occurs when food or other objects become stuck in the upper airway or windpipe, preventing a child from breathing effectively. The main signs of choking include difficulty breathing, speaking or crying, making a whistling or 'crowing' noise or no sound at all, and in severe cases the face, lips, and fingernails may start turning blue.

Gagging is different from choking. Gagging is a normal part of children learning to eat foods. It is a normal response and children recover quickly. Children should gag less as their chewing skills develop.

It is impossible to eliminate every single thing from your home and environment that might cause your child to choke. But there are some common things parents can remove from the environment to lower a child's risk for choking. Some common choking hazards include food, toys, and household items.

## Foods

Foods that are the most commonly associated with children choking include:

- Candy (specifically, hard candy)
- Caramels



- Cheese (specifically, cubed cheese)
- Chips
- Fruits (specifically, fruit with skins)
- Grapes (specifically, whole grapes)
- Gum
- Hot dogs
- Ice cubes
- Lollipops
- Marshmallows
- Nuts
- Peanut butter
- Popcorn
- Pretzels
- Raisins
- Vegetables (specifically, raw vegetables)

Food is safest for children when it has been cut into small pieces and seeds and pits have been removed. Here are some examples of ways to prepare common foods to make them safer for children:  
*Fruit with skins or pits, such as apples or*

*apricots.* Remove pits and peel fruits before giving them to your child. Fruits can also be diced or cooked and mashed.

*Fish or chicken with bones.* Carefully cut the meat off the bone and then into small pieces. Check meat thoroughly for any signs of bones.

*Peanut butter.* Sticky foods, like peanut butter, should be consumed in small amounts. Large spoonfuls of peanut butter can block the windpipe. Peanut butter can also stick to the lining of the throat and windpipe, making a child unable to breathe.

*Hot dogs and sausages.* Slice and dice these meats both length and width-wise. You may want to remove the skin before cutting them.

*Grapes.* Peel and mash grapes before serving.

*Beans* (green, string, lima, kidney, and others the size of a marble or larger). Mash before serving.

*Peas*. Although peas are small individually, a child who eats more than one pea at a time may choke.

*Whole carrots*. A child may break off too big a bite and choke. Cook carrots and cut them into smaller pieces, or cut raw carrots into thin slices.

### **Toys and Household Objects**

Toys are a big source of choking hazards. Deflated or broken latex balloons are especially dangerous since the balloons can stick to the breathing tube and be difficult to remove. Make sure smaller children can't get hold of toys with small parts intended for older kids. Follow the age recommendations on toy packages.

Here's a list of more items that can pose a choking hazard to children and should be placed out of reach of little ones.

- Latex balloons, either uninflated or broken pieces
- Jacks, marbles, and marble-sized balls
- Toys with small detachable parts, like wheels
- Rubber bands
- Coins
- Adhesive bandages
- Buttons
- Beads and other jewelry
- Thumbtacks and screws
- Paper clips, pen tops, and safety pins
- Clothing price tags
- Small holiday decorations
- Eggshells
- Bottle caps
- Plastic tabs from protective coverings on containers

### **Conduct a Choke Test**

Parents can use a choke tube guide, a plastic device available in most baby stores, to see if a toy is a choking risk. A toilet paper roll works just as well. Test small objects by passing them through a choke tube guide or toilet-paper tube. If they fit inside, they could become lodged in the throat of a young child.

## **SAVE THE DATE**

Please save the date to join the City & County of San Francisco, Human Services Agency, Family and Children Services Permanency Program and the Parenting for Permanency College in celebrating the:

### **Annual FCS Resource Family Appreciation and Training Event**

**"The Red Carpet" Friday, May 10, 2019**

**Register at <https://forms.gle/yoGjrUDHfZRRute28>  
or contact your RFA worker**

# **Resource Family Approval Annual Update**

All resource families are required to complete an annual update to their Resource Family Approval with the County. An annual update is a reassessment of the caregiver and the caregiver's home to ensure that they are in compliance with the Resource Family Approval requirements. The annual update takes place right around the anniversary date that the caregiver received his or her initial approval, but completed no more than 30 days after the approval anniversary date. Or, it can also take place if changes occurred in a caregiver's life that prompt an update to a person's approval, such as a change in marital status, a significant change in health, a move to a new location, a new adult living in the home, a request to care for additional children, or the birth of a child to the resource family.

The annual update has several components, including an annual home visit, verification of a background clearance, and a determination whether the caregiver's training is current and up-to-date.

To prepare for an annual update, resource families should make sure that they have completed their 8 hours of training and maintain their

### **SECTION 9-02: Annual Update of Resource Family Approval**

- (a) *At least annually, a County*
- (a) *At least annually, a County shall update the approval of a Resource Family.*
- (1) *An update shall begin no sooner than 60 calendar days prior to the approval anniversary date and shall be completed no later than 30 calendar days after the approval anniversary date.*
- (2) *A County shall conduct an announced inspection of the home pursuant to subsection (b)(2).*

certificates as proof of their training hours. Please note that the certification of the CPR/First Aid course is separate from the requirement for 8 hours of training for the annual update. This means that approved RFA caregivers are required to take 8 hours of annual update training per year, and maintain a current CPR/First Aid certification. If a CPR/First Aid certification is expired, then parents will need to separately take the 6 hours of CPR/First Aid training, which is not counted as part of the 8 hours of annual update training.

# Celebrate June Champion Nichole Cook

Our June Champion for Children is Nichole Cook. Nichole has been committed to her grandson's well-being and comfort since his birth. With three minor children of her own and an adult son battling addiction, Nichole received a phone call in December 2017 that her grandson was born and she might need to help. She gave no hesitation when offering to care for her newborn grandson. And with that, her life changed over one phone call.

While providing her grandson with love, attention, affection and care, Nichole still finds time to show his birth parents support and encouragement. Nichole is diligent in monitoring her grandson's development and medical care, and has enrolled him in an excellent daycare that provides learning and enrichment opportunities.

Despite any hardship in her own life, Nichole has always prioritized the baby's needs and well-being. As a single parent of three minor children in her home, Nichole speaks honestly that having another child to care for is hard work.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm still learning," she says. She chose to give up a full-time job, but in the end she wanted to be there for her grandson. "I know what would have happened if I didn't bring him into my home," Nichole explains. "He would have had three options, and I am certain that I am the best option for my grandson. He's a little piece of light in my life, and he constantly makes people smile."



Nichole's advice for other parents is to value the time with your children. "It's important to spend time with them, be silly with them, hug them. A 20-second hug can help you and your child feel calmer," she conveys encouragingly.

Nichole expresses her gratitude for Monica Terullo, Protective Services Worker, who has supported Nichole in becoming a foster parent. Growing up, Nichole's perception of the foster care system was not a positive one, associated with taking children away from their homes rather than one supporting families. But Monica has changed that perception for Nichole.

"Monica understands the realities of each situation and has been there for me. She has turned that negative perception around for me a bit, and I feel fortunate to work with her."

Nichole is committed to her grandson's future and has opted to adopt him. She continues to be a pleasure to work with and her grandson is lucky to have her. The San Francisco Family & Children's Services and the Parenting for Permanency College thank Nichole Cook for her endless love and dedication to her family. Congratulations to our June Champion for Children!

## K.I.D.S.

Published bimonthly for San Francisco County foster parents, resource families, NREFMs and kin care providers. To suggest a topic, submit an article, promote an event, or provide feedback, email Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org.

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Newsletter Website: <https://www.sfhsa.org/newsletters>

### Helpful Phone Numbers

HSA Operator	(415) 557-5000
CPS Child Abuse Hotline	(800) 856-5553 or (415) 558-2650
Foster Care Ombudsman	(415) 558-2828
Transportation Duty Line	(415) 557-5376
Licensing/RFA/Recruitment Hotline	(415) 558-2200
San Francisco Families Making a Difference	
Mentor Program for Care Providers	(415) 557-5400
Free Foster Parenting Respite Service	(415) 861-4060 x 3035
Community Services	211
Non-emergency Government Services	311

FCS Agency Directory: [www.sfhsa.org/174.htm](http://www.sfhsa.org/174.htm)

You can register for these and all PPC training through your RFA worker or by contacting:

Bay Area Academy

Care Provider Registration Line

510-271-0951 x 117



### Welcome our newest Resource Family Participants

The Parenting for Permanency College is excited to congratulate the latest participants from the February 2019 and March 2019 English Resource Family Approval (RFA) PreService training and the February/March 2019 SA/HIV Infant Training Programs. Participants dedicate time from their personal time to learn and develop their skills during RFA PreService and placement training. This dedication is focus on providing a loving, safe and nurturing environment for San Francisco County's most vulnerable children and young adults. We welcome them to our network of dedicated Resource Families.



RFA Pre-Service Approval Training	
<b>Spanish RFA Pre-Service Training</b>	<b>May 4, 2019 (Saturday)</b> <b>9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.</b>
English RFA Pre-Service Training	May 4, 2019 (Saturday) 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
English RFA Pre-Service Training	May 11, 2019 (Saturday) 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Placement Training	
SA/HIV 40-hour Cycle	<b>May 14-June 13, 2019 (Tuesday/Thursday)</b> <b>5:30-8:30 p.m.</b>
ABC's of Baby Care	June 6, 2019 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Ongoing Training	
<b>Spanish RFA Advanced Training: Childhood Trauma</b>	<b>May 18, 2019</b> <b>9 a.m. - Noon</b>
<b>Spanish RFA Advanced Training: Loss &amp; Transitions</b>	<b>May 18, 2019</b> <b>12:30-3:30 p.m.</b>
RFA Advanced Training: Childhood Trauma	June 1, 2019 9 a.m. - Noon
RFA Advanced Training: Loss & Transitions	June 1, 2019 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Advanced Training: Parenting for Permanency College: RFA Sppreciation Training Event (English & Spanish)	May 10, 2019 6:30-10 p.m.
Just in Time (offers a variety of training topics)	Online at <a href="http://www.qpicalifornia.org/pages/Video.shtm">http://www.qpicalifornia.org/pages/Video.shtm</a>
Foster Parent College (offers a variety of topics)	Online at <a href="http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/">http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/</a>

## Special Announcements

### Support Group Info:

#### ENGLISH SUPPORT GROUPS

Held every 3rd Tuesday of the month  
5:30 pm refreshments • 6 – 8 p.m. meeting

#### SPANISH SUPPORT GROUPS

Held every third Thursday of the month  
5:30 p.m. refreshments • 6-8 p.m. meeting