

Chewing Can Be Tricky

Keeping Children Safer at Mealtime

Donna Edwards, MA CCC-SLP, BCS-S

Board Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders

ASHA Fellow

Dayton Children's Hospital

Dayton, OH

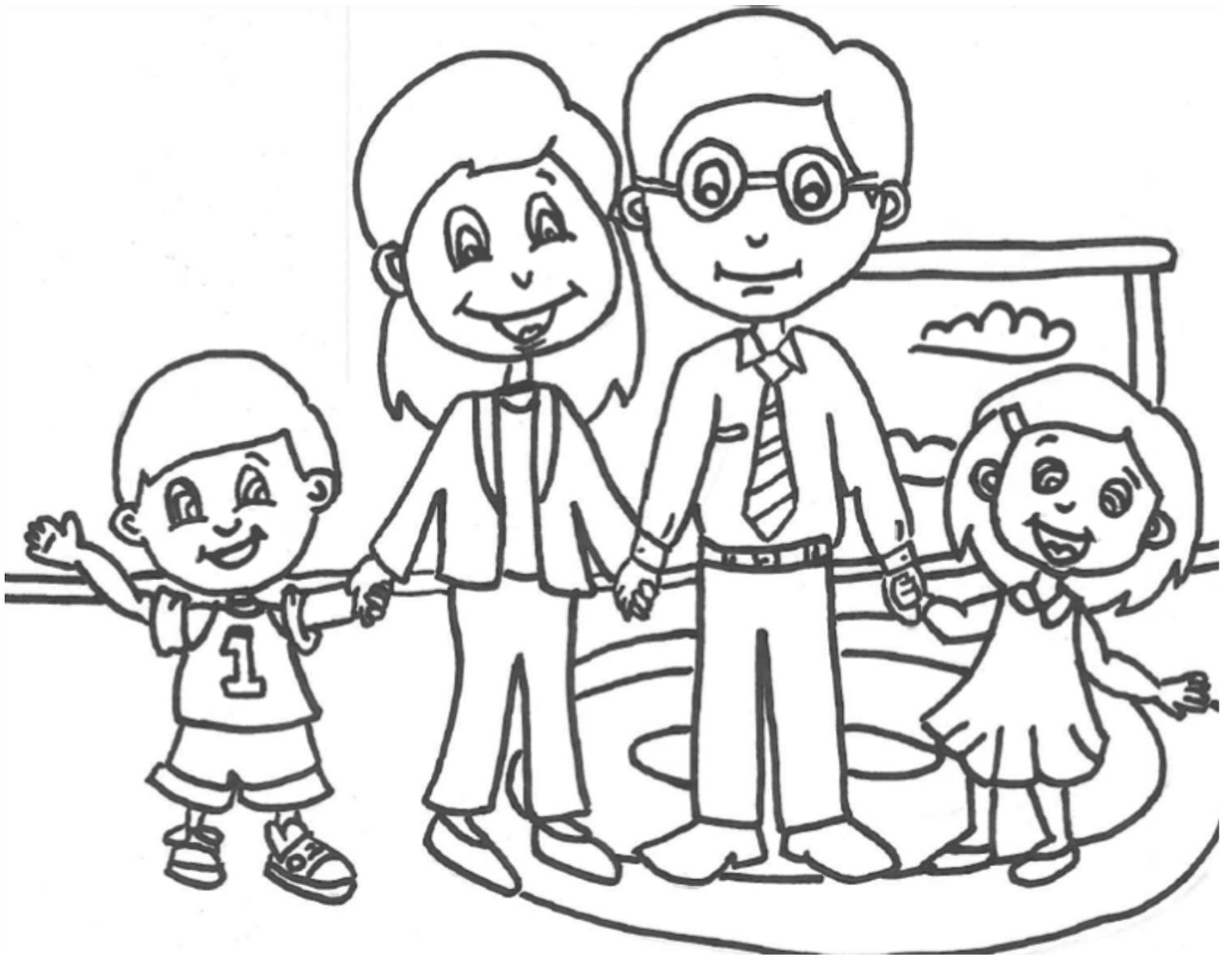


For Children! For Parents! For Professionals! For the Community!

For all the places our children have meal times.

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Mom and dad, did you know that according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), some children choke on food daily? You should not choke on the food you eat. If you do, it's a sign that something is wrong!

This coloring book is a tool for you to use to discuss chewing and swallowing with your child to increase safety and reduce choking risk.



For most children, drinks move through the mouth easily! GULP! GULP!



SO do some other foods!



But Chewing Can Be Tricky!



Some foods are tricky to chew because of wide shapes....

Or long shapes like the
tube where you breathe.





Some things take a long time to chew, and the muscles may get tired.

Try the activity below to get an idea of your child's chewing skill. See a speech/language pathologist who is a feeding specialist if you have questions or concerns.

Can you bite through a cracker on the left side of your mouth?



Can you bite through a cracker on the right side of your mouth?



Can you chew it on the left side of your mouth?



Can you chew it on the right side of your mouth?



Name: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Write three foods you can chew easily:

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What is a food that is harder to chew? _____

3. Circle the right answer:

If I have trouble chewing food I should:

- A. Tell an adult
- B. Keep it a secret

4. Circle your answer:

- Eating at home is:
 - A. Easy B. Hard
- Eating at school is:
 - A. Easy B. Hard



I think I took a really
big bite!

For Parents:

Safe Eating Tips for Children



- Sit down for meals
- If you cough or choke while eating, the food may be too hard for you.
- Take small bites
- Empty your mouth before the next bite
- Take drinks during the meal
- Look for foods that you chew well
- Avoid eating in a car
- Tell an adult if you have trouble chewing

Activities for Parents & Professionals

- Family shopping trips to find foods that are easy to chew
- Food grid activities to label and describe color, texture, width, temperature, aroma of foods
- Chewing experiences to determine which foods are easier, or harder, to bite and chew
- Exploration of bite size and which side is the most efficient for chewing for each child and family
- Food scavenger hunt to find healthy fruits, vegetables, grains and proteins that are easy to chew
- Prepare the same food item in 15 different ways to show variety and that food may not be preferred one way but readily accepted in another form
- Compare and contrast two foods or food groups and how they relate to our health
- Find foods in graduated colors of the rainbow
- Discuss chewing development and meal times in all settings



For Professionals

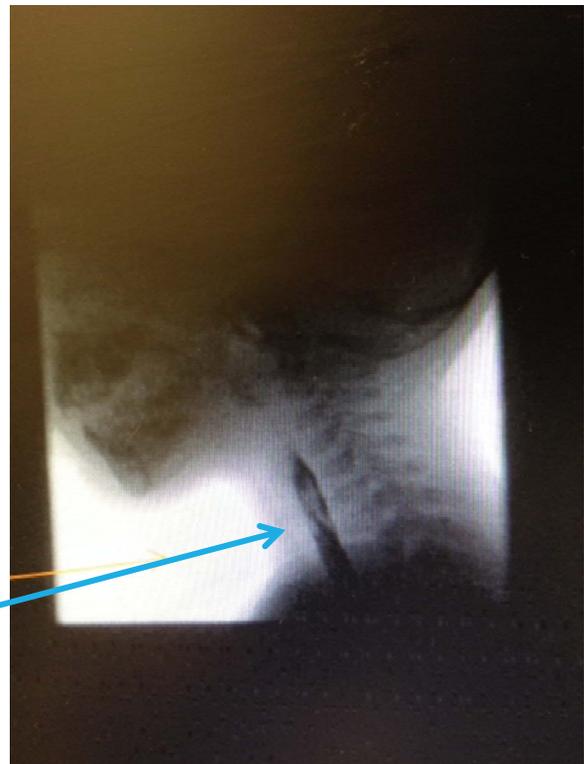
Children may vary in development of chewing skills. Emergence of dentition, muscular stability and neurodevelopment impact feeding, chewing and swallowing function. Children with special health care needs may be especially vulnerable to increased choking risk.

Research estimates that feeding problems in children range from 25-35% in typically developing children and 33-80% in those with special healthcare needs.

Some foods are tricky for children because they take a long time to chew and may be swallowed prematurely before sufficiently masticated. In the U.S., our hospital emergency rooms serve more than 10,000 children annually for food choking injuries, and every 5 days a child does not survive. This is often preventable!

Below is a radiographic image of a toddler swallowing a piece of steak after insufficient mastication. This child, as with many children we serve, may be offered foods above current feeding skill level and thus poses an increased risk of choking.

Steak



Strategies to increase safety of children at meal times include but are not limited to:

1. Direct supervision with all oral intake.
2. Relaxed, leisurely snack and meal times.
3. Avoid eating when walking, playing or riding in a car.
4. Positioning 90 degrees at hips, head in neutral alignment and feet supported.
5. Consider shape, size, width, consistency and chewing skill of each child when selecting foods.
6. Reduce bite size of cooked or steamed soft vegetables with seeds and pits removed. For those children with sufficient chewing skills, cut hot dogs and bananas lengthwise and widthwise.
7. Encourage caregivers to demonstrate safe eating habits and chew food thoroughly.
8. Modify diet and foods offered that might pose increased choking risk to optimize child safety.

Citations and Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>

American Academy of Pediatrics <https://healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Responding-to-a-Choking-Emergency.aspx>

American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders
<http://www.swallowingdisorders.org>

Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Children
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/swallowing/Feeding-and-Swallowing-Disorders-in-Children/> (parents)

Public resources regarding Speech Language Pathology
<http://www.asha.org/public/>

Pediatric Dysphagia <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Pediatric-Dysphagia/> (professionals)

State Association Contact Information for Speech Language Pathologists
<http://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/>

Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter>

Family sharing story and resources <https://www.facebook.com/JTsLaw>

Choking prevention for children
http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/choking_prevention_for_children.htm

**Burklow, K. A., Phelps, A. N., Schultz, J. R., McConnell, K., & Rudolph, K. (1998).
Classifying complex pediatric feeding disorders. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology & Nutrition*, 27(2), 143-147.

Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5142a1.htm>