



Playing It Safe In The Kitchen

Children of all ages love to learn new skills in the kitchen. Math concepts, reading, time management and self esteem are all introduced during the simple act of preparing a recipe. No matter the age, children need proper **adult supervision** when using any utensils or equipment.

Utensil Use: Age-By-Age Guide

**2-3
years**

Children this age can safely use the following utensils:

- spoons • butter knives • mashers (for cooled fruits/vegetables) • whisks • strainers • colanders • cookie cutters • rolling pins

**3-4
years**

All of the above, plus the following:

- plastic measuring spoons • plastic knives • egg beaters • non-electric food grinders and juicers

**4-5
years**

All of the above, plus the following:

- hand mixers • vegetable peelers • cheese graters • nut crackers

**6-8
years**

With proper super-vision, mature 6-8 year olds may begin to learn how to use a sharp knife.

To reduce the risk of injury in the kitchen, teachers and caregivers who cook with children should keep the following tips in mind:

ALWAYS WASH HANDS before beginning to handle food.

NEVER LEAVE young children unattended in the kitchen or allow them to use electrical appliances.

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER you know how to use should always be handy.

REPEATEDLY EXPLAIN or discuss the dangers of hot food, water, and electrical appliances.

TEACH the importance of refrigerating perishable foods.

NEVER LET CHILDREN use the stove, oven, or garbage disposal.

FACE POT HANDLES toward the center of the stove.

SIT WITH OLDER CHILDREN while using electrical appliances.

INSIST THAT CHILDREN sit while cutting.

SUPERVISE CHILDREN'S USE of hot tap water.

KEEP POISONOUS chemicals and food separate. Prevent access if need be.

KEEP SMALL, CHOPPED foods - choking hazards - away from children under two.

Age-Appropriate Foods

All food should be stored, prepared or served so that they are micro-biologically, chemically and physically safe to eat. Foods that are safe for children to eat should be clean and wholesome, not likely to cause choking and right for their age and development.

The foods most commonly associated with choking include hotdogs sliced in rounds; whole grapes; hard candy; and nuts.

To protect against choking for children under the age of 4, do not serve these foods:

- spoonfuls of peanut butter;
- mini-marshmallows;
- large chunks of meat;
- nuts;
- seeds;
- peanuts;
- raw carrots (in rounds);
- fish with bones;



- dried fruit;
- hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds);
- hard candy;
- popcorn;
- raw peas;
- whole grapes;
- ice cubes;
- raisins;
- pretzels;
- and chips.

Some foods can be changed to make them safer for young children. Try the following:

Hotdogs	Cut in quarters lengthwise, then into small pieces
Whole grapes	Cut in half lengthwise
Nuts	Chop finely
Raw carrots	Chop finely or cut into thin strips
Peanut butter	Spread thinly on crackers; mix with applesauce and cinnamon and spread thinly on bread
Fish with bones	Remove the bones

References

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