



Little VIPs at Lowther Endowed School

Choking Risk Assessment

This Risk Assessment should be read in conjunction with Little VIPs Choking Risk Policy and Procedure

At Little VIPs at Lowther Endowed School, governors and the whole team take seriously their responsibilities to keep children safe and minimise the risk of harm. In early years, choking is a risk to children as they will be learning to eat, trying new foods, their facial and swallowing muscles are not fully developed and they are curious and will test things out by putting them in their mouths!

In young children, choking is often caused by small objects like coins, balloons, small toys, and food like nuts, grapes, hot dogs – anything shaped to fit inside a child's windpipe.

We have put in place policies and procedures to ensure that our staff are well trained in minimising the risks of choking by careful selection of age appropriate resources and by the preparation of appropriate foods. Our staff have all received full training on responding to an incident of choking.

What is a Choking Risk Assessment?

A choking risk assessment checks how likely someone is to have trouble breathing or swallowing things that could cause harm or suffocation. It looks at their age, medical factors, age and development age, oral health, cognitive ability and understanding, the effects of medications, illness and other things that might make choking more likely.

We will also watch how a child eats, swallows, and take cares of their mouth to help us determine the risk level.

Who Requires a Choking Risk Assessment?

Little VIPs Day Care has a general Choking Risk Assessment to identify and mitigate the risks specific to children under the age of 5. Any children who have a health care plan or other identified needs which may mean that choking is a higher risk for them will have an individual risk assessment.

We will review our Choking Risk Assessment annually or sooner if circumstances or medical advice changes.

The Key Risk Factors for Choking

At Little VIPs we are aware of a number of risk factors for Choking:

1. **Age and Development age** – those under 5 are at a higher risk than older children. Their age will be an indicator of risk but their stage of development and any learning disability will be taken into account by staff.

2. **Swallowing Abilities** – difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), under development of facial muscles, being tongue tied, coughing while eating, pocketing food in mouth, loss of liquid/food from mouth before swallowing will also be observed.
3. **Oral Health Factors** – poor oral and dental health may also increase risk.
4. **Medical History** – development disabilities such as Down’s Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy, will also raise the risk as will and medications that cause dry mouth as they reduce swallow safety.
5. **Illness** – a child who is poorly with a cold, runny/blocked nose, or a cough will have additional difficulties in swallowing and an increased risk of choking.

Children choking risk assessment

Factor	Assessment	Risk Category	Mitigating Action
Age	Age 0-5	High Risk	<p>Provide close supervision during meals – within sight and sound, ensure thorough chewing and avoid distractions. Feed soft, moist foods to younger children. Cut food appropriately, ie strips not cubes or coin sized discs.</p> <p>Ensure babies are supported with bottle feeding and not left in a propped position with a bottle.</p> <p>Support parents with advice relating to preparation of food and safe weaning</p>
Medical history/Disability	Swallowing disorders	High Risk	Consult a speech-language expert if dysphagia assessment needed and follow recommendations. Note additional requirements on individual health care plan and risk assessment
Oral health	Poor oral hygiene	Medium Risk	Regular dental checkups and cleanings to maintain good oral health. Avoid hard foods that may damage teeth or gums.

Dietary needs	Texture, consistency of foods	Medium Risk	Where a special diet is prescribed, follow medical advice and regarding appropriate food textures and consistencies.
Environment	Loose objects	High Risk	<p>Regularly inspect the learning environment, including outdoor areas, for potential choking hazards, such as small toys, coins, or loose objects. Keep choking hazards out of reach. Use age appropriate and ability appropriate resources.</p> <p>Use Choke tester</p>
Food preparation	<p>Hard, crunchy, or slippery foods</p> <p>Foods not in line with development age, particularly regarding weaning</p>	High Risk	<p>Avoid hard, crunchy, or slippery foods that may be difficult to chew or swallow, eg peanut butter, nuts, seeds, boiled sweets, pop-corn, marshmallows, jelly cubes. Cut food in line with Food Standards Agency Safety guidance, eg fingers and strips and not small cubes. Half grapes lengthways. Cut up cherry tomatoes, etc.</p> <p>Ensure information is gathered from parents regarding weaning and setting weaning policy is followed</p> <p>Check food prepared at home in lunch boxes</p> <p>Check food served from School kitchen</p> <p>Use Choke tester</p>
Feeding techniques	Fast eating	High Risk	<p>Child to be sat upright on chair, not reclined, supervised at all times</p> <p>Infant formula to be bottle fed, supervised and supported by staff at all times -not to be left reclined or propped with a bottle.</p> <p>Encourage slow, deliberate eating to give the body time to properly process food. Allow adequate time between bites.</p> <p>Teach and talk about chewing food thoroughly before swallowing</p> <p>Encourage child to drink plenty of water/milk</p>

Behaviour	Talking or laughing while eating	Medium Risk	Encourage focus on eating during meals. Avoid distractions and maintain a quiet environment.
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3rd January 2025