

# Things that can Choke or Strangle

“It was the usual morning chaos in our house, trying to get the packed lunch made for my older son while the little one was on his 4th tantrum. I threw some grapes in a bowl to give to him to distract him and carried on. I realised it had all gone a bit silent... he had shoved a handful of them in his mouth and was very still. I had completely forgotten to cut them up. He didn't choke but it was a hideous moment!”

Sound familiar? It's easy in the rush of the day for slip ups to happen. Here are things to keep front of mind keeping children safe from choking and strangulation:

 **Blind cords** – it can take only **20 seconds for a toddler to die** from strangulation if they get tangled in a blind cord.

- Fit a cleat hook to tie blind cords and chains back
- Keep children's bedroom furniture away from blind cords and chains.

 **Food, drink and small toys** – **choking can be silent** with nothing to warn you that something is wrong. Babies can choke on liquids and can't push a bottle away.

- Cut food up into small pieces for young children, particularly grapes and other round foods, which should be cut length-ways in to quarters.
- Encourage older children to put small parts from their toys away
- Don't prop a baby's bottle up and leave them to feed.
- Watch the St John's Ambulance Chokeables film at [www.sja.org.uk/thechokeables](http://www.sja.org.uk/thechokeables) to find out what to do if your child starts choking.

 **Nappy sacks** – young babies naturally grasp things and put them to their mouths, but don't have the ability to pull things away. This means **they can suffocate on nappy sacks.**

- Store nappy sacks safely away and never under the cot mattress.

 **Sleeping and slings** – babies can be suffocated by things they can't push away.

- Don't use duvets, pillows or cot bumpers for young babies and put them down to sleep in the 'feet to foot' position
- Don't sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby
- Don't sleep in the same bed as your baby if you smoke, drink or take drugs or are extremely tired, if your baby was born prematurely or was a low birth-weight
- Follow the T.I.C.K.S advice at [www.babyslingsafety.co.uk](http://www.babyslingsafety.co.uk) when using a sling, wrap or baby carrier.

## Find out more and share

Follow us on Facebook and share with friends and family:

[www.facebook.com/ChildAccidentPreventionTrust](http://www.facebook.com/ChildAccidentPreventionTrust)

Visit the safety advice section of the Child Accident Prevention Trust website:

[www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

# Choking, strangulation and suffocation

At least two young children die from strangulation each year after getting caught in a blind cord.



## Activity ideas

- Bring in foods like carrots, grapes, peanuts, hard-boiled sweets and a tin of hot dog sausages and put these on display to demonstrate common choking risks. Demonstrate how cutting grapes in to quarters lengthways (not across) makes them safer for young children.
- Gather together a small box of everyday household items that can cause threats to breathing or help to prevent them. Place them within a small transparent box or jar e.g. pen lids, small toy parts, grapes, blind cord cleats, nappy sacks etc.
- Ask parents to share their ideas for a decoy/safe drawer or kitchen cupboard, full of things which are safe and too big to swallow, for children to play with.
- Use toys as props to demonstrate safe sleeping advice for babies. Gather together a toy cot, bedding, bumpers, mattress and doll to show what to look out for when putting your baby to sleep.

## CAPT resources for your event

- Finger food without fear flyer
- I can choke on small things poster
- Put small things where I can't choke on them flyer
- Preventing accidents session plans – contains dedicated session plans on:
  - Choking on small things
  - Suffocation from nappy sacks
  - Strangulation on hanging blind cords
- Keep your baby safe booklet
- One Step Ahead wall chart

Available from CAPT's  
online shop

[www.capt.org.uk/shop](http://www.capt.org.uk/shop)

## Useful links

St John Ambulance has created a short, memorable animation showing common risks and giving first aid for choking: [www.sja.org.uk/chokingbaby](http://www.sja.org.uk/chokingbaby)

British Red Cross has advice and videos on how to administer first aid for choking babies and children: [www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Baby-and-Child-First-Aid](http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Baby-and-Child-First-Aid)

The British Blind and Shutter Association's Make It Safe video highlights the dangers of blind cords: [www.makeitsafe.org.uk](http://www.makeitsafe.org.uk)