**Policy**

Monkey Puzzle is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of children, especially in preventing choking hazards. This policy outlines effective measures that can be taken to minimize choking risks.

**Procedure**

**Age-Appropriate activities/equipment**

All play equipment, furniture and toys should be risk assessed to ensure they are safe and do not contain parts that could come off and pose a choking risk. Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are kept in good condition.

Staff must ensure that all activities are age-appropriate and that suitable risk assessments are completed to prevent these incidents from occurring.

**What other ways might a baby or child choke?**

Children, particularly those aged from birth to 5, often put objects in their mouth. This is a normal part of how they explore the world. Some small objects, such as marbles, beads and button batteries, are just the right size to get stuck in a child's airway and cause choking.

Button batteries may be particularly hazardous if swallowed, potentially causing serious burns in the throat of a child as well as posing a choking risk.

Babies explore the world with their mouths anything smaller than the diameter of a two-pence piece can choke a baby. Coins and buttons are common causes of choking. Babies can get hold of small parts from older children’s toys if packed away in the wrong boxes.

**Other reasons for choking include;**

* Babies being propped up to drink their milk. If they get into trouble, they will not be able to push the bottle away
* Foods that are unsuitable for their development stage e.g. boiled sweets and nuts
* Foods that are too big for them to manage for their development stage e.g. whole grapes and orange segments

**Choke Testing Tubes**

To ensure suitable risk assessment and safety of all children in the setting it is advised that all settings have a choke testing tube within the nursery and staff must be familiar on how to use them.

The best way to avoid choking with small parts is to make sure that small objects are risk assessed per toy, per age group, using the choke testing tubes. No matter how careful you are, a child may choke on something.

Choke Testing tubes can be purchased here: <https://www.safetots.co.uk/babydan-choke-tester.html>

**Food**

Each room must ensure that babies and young children are alert and seated safely upright in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating. Babies and young children should be with in sight and sound all times while eating (this includes snack and cooking activities). You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.

Choking can happen with any foods, but ‘firm foods’, bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these essential steps.

* Make sure food is suitably prepared and served for babies and children under 5 years old.
* Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age
* Think about size, shape and texture of food
* Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods.
* Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking
* Ensure that babies and young children are alert and seated safely upright in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating
* Babies and young children should be supervised at all times while eating
* You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm
* Encourage babies and young children to chew food well
* Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking

**What to do if you detect a child is choking?**

If a child suddenly starts coughing or seems to be struggling to breathe/make noises this may be an indication that they're choking.

* If you can see the object, try to remove it. Don't poke blindly or repeatedly with your fingers.
* You could make things worse by pushing the object further in and making it harder to remove.
* If your child's coughing loudly, encourage them to carry on coughing to bring up what they're choking on and don't leave them.
* If your child's coughing isn't effective (it's silent or they can't breathe in properly), shout for help immediately and decide whether they're still conscious.
* If your child's still conscious, but they're either not coughing or their coughing isn’t effective, use back blows.

**Back blows for babies under 1 year**

* Sit down and lay your baby face down along your thigh or forearm, supporting their back and head with your hand.
* Give up to 5 sharp back blows with the heel of 1 hand in the middle of the back between the shoulder blades.

**Back blows for children over 1 year**

* Lay a small child face down on your lap as you would a baby.
* If this isn't possible, support your child in a forward-leaning position and give 5 back blows from behind.
* If back blows don't relieve the choking and your baby or child is still conscious, give chest thrusts to infants under 1 year or abdominal thrusts to children over 1 year.
* This will create an artificial cough, increasing pressure in the chest and helping to dislodge the object.

**Chest thrusts for children under 1 year**

* Lay your baby face up along the length of your thighs.
* Find the breastbone and place 2 fingers in the middle.
* Give 5 sharp chest thrusts (pushes), compressing the chest by about a third.

**Abdominal thrusts for children over 1 year**

* Stand or kneel behind your child. Place your arms under the child's arms and around their upper abdomen.
* Clench your fist and place it between the navel and ribs.
* Grasp this hand with your other hand and pull sharply inwards and upwards.
* Repeat up to 5 times.
* Make sure you don't apply pressure to the lower ribcage, as this may cause damage.
* Following chest or abdominal thrusts, reassess your child as follows.
* If the object still isn't dislodged and your child's still conscious, continue the sequence of back blows and either chest or abdominal thrusts.
* Call out or send for help, if you're still on your own.
* Don't leave the child.
* Call 999 if the blockage doesn't come out after trying back blows and either chest or abdominal thrusts. Keep trying this cycle until help arrives.
* Even if the object has come out, get medical help. Part of the object might have been left behind, or your child might have been hurt by the procedure.

**Unconscious child with choking**

* If a choking child is, or becomes, unconscious, put them on a firm, flat surface and shout for help.
* Call 999, putting the phone on speakerphone so your hands are free.
* Don't leave the child at any stage.
* Open the child's mouth. If the object's clearly visible and you can grasp it easily, remove it.
* Start CPR

**Linked Policies**

First Aid Policy

Early Years Food Choking Hazards Guidance

Mealtime and Dietary Policy

Maintaining Food Standards Policy