



# Choking Prevention Awareness Month

## Tips of the Week

# Choking Prevention Awareness

## Tips of the Week: Organization



1. Ensure you gather everything you may need (condiments, utensils, extra napkins, etc.) before starting the meal so that you can supervise at the table with the person who is eating.
2. Have diet orders, mealtime strategies, and supervision requirements in an easily accessible spot. Try organizing them in a binder kept in the dining area.
3. If preparing lunch for the day program, ensure prescribed diets are adhered to.
4. All ground and pureed foods should be labeled when sent to the day program.

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## Tips of the Week: Positioning/Seating



1. Positioning is very important— individuals should sit upright at the table, feet on the floor, and hips against the back of the chair.
2. People in wheelchairs should be repositioned just before they eat. Hips should be against the back of the wheelchair, the wheelchair should be tilted up if necessary, and feet should be supported on the floor or on foot rests.
3. Avoid allowing individuals to eat while laying down/reclining, standing, walking, in front of the TV, or in the car. Encourage eating at a kitchen or dining room table while at home.
4. Create a consistent dining routine and utilize prescribed adaptive equipment for positioning during meals as ordered.

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## Tips of the Week: Helpful practices



1. Portion meals using small plates, small cups, and small utensils if warranted for the individual. A prescription may be required. Refill the plate or cup as needed.
2. Encourage all individuals to alternate every few bites with a sip of liquid. This can assist with pacing and wash down any food that may get stuck in the mouth/throat.
3. Enjoy foods with added moisture (extra condiments on sandwiches, dipping sauces, etc.)
4. Keep meal and snack schedules predictable and consistent. This may reduce food grabbing caused by hunger or a late snack/meal.

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## Tips of the Week: Reacting in an emergency



1. If choking occurs, call 911 as per Danielle's Law – only trained medical personnel can ensure the person's airway is clear.
2. If an individual starts coughing while eating, DO NOT give them water or any other food/beverage. Coughing is a defense mechanism, and the individual should be given the opportunity to cough the food out.
3. If coughing becomes severe or if breathing becomes impacted, implement first aid strategies and your facility's choking response protocol (e.g., abdominal thrusts, back blows, CPR).

# Choking Prevention Awareness

## Tips of the Week: Incident Reporting



1. All choking events are reportable incidents, even if they occur in family home or own home settings.
2. Report choking incidents as soon as it is safe per Division guidelines. DDD Speech Pathology staff provide outreach and support after each choking incident and can help ensure safe mealtime experiences and prevention of future incidents.
3. Include thorough details about the event in the IR. Utilize the choking checklist on the Division Website to ensure all pertinent information is captured. Include information about 911 being called and actions/outcomes of first responders. A detailed IR reduces the amount of follow up needed from the reporter.