

## **Safe Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Aspiration and/or Choking**

### **BITE-SIZED PIECES**

All of those the speech pathology department has served at MORC with the following disorders/problems have had their food at least cut into bite-sized pieces as a courtesy and especially as a safety factor. This includes those with damage to the nervous system, i.e. those with cerebral palsy, Huntington's, Parkinson's, Rett's, Angelman's, Down Syndrome, ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), MS( multiple sclerosis), MD (muscular dystrophy), Alzheimer's and/or stroke as well as those who are nonverbal, aging and/or have decayed/missing teeth have eating/chewing/swallowing problems. Those on medications with dry mouth as a side effect and/or those with ADHD (attention disorder with hyperactivity) who may demonstrate behaviors such as stuffing their mouths who have been seen by our department may also have had their food cut into bite-sized pieces.

#### **A portion size is one bite-sized item.**

It is our recommendation that all who are considered to be at higher risk such as those mentioned above be monitored for signs/symptoms of dysphagia such as coughing or choking and referred for a speech pathology evaluation if so noted.

If the speech pathologist tells you that bite-sized is essentially  $\frac{1}{2}$  by  $\frac{1}{2}$  by  $\frac{1}{2}$  it may not mean much but if we tell you that bite-sized is the size of a regular sized Cheez-It or a dime it may help you visualize the size. Bite-sized might also mean 1 inch pieces or chopped into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch size. Pictures of the size recommended are given to the caregivers typically. Each modification is individualized to keep the person safe and healthy.

As a reminder, when Bite-size is recommended, it also means that you check to see that items in soup are not too big and that melon balls, cherry tomatoes and grapes are halved.

Also please remember that hard to chew foods-those most likely to cause a choking episode-like tough meats, raw vegetables, hard/crunch snack foods can be chopped into  $\frac{1}{4}$  bite-sized (similar to pea sized) as these are simply difficult to break down no matter who is chewing them.

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