

# Essex School Meals Service

## Health and Safety Alert Update:

### **Grapes, Cherry Tomatoes, Olives, Silverskin Onions and other similar sized products risk of choking.**

In November 2015 the County Council raised an alert. This was after the death of a toddler, choking on a grape (the incident occurred in North East England).

Corporate Health & Safety and the Schools Meals Service have provided advice on this.

### **Information:**

- Incidents of this nature are very rare and so the risks in relation to this issue are low.
- For schools it is about managing risks and teaching pupils about risks and how they manage them.
- There are likely to be quite wide-ranging views on whether this advice is 'over the top'.
- Young children/toddlers are the most likely to be 'at risk'.
- Grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives and silverskin onions are particularly an issue. This is due to them being small, easy to swallow, can be soft and change shape.
- They are easy to swallow whole and the right size to completely block the airway.
- Some schools like to cut grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives and silverskin onions in half.
- **Community, Voluntary Controlled schools LA Schools should follow the actions.**
- **Foundation, V/A, Academy and Free Schools can follow this advice or manage in a different way.**

### Action Required:

#### **For Early Years and Reception:**

- Grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives, silverskin onions and other similar sized products should be cut in half lengthways.
- Inform parents of early years and reception children these foods in lunch boxes should be cut up.
- Schools cannot check every lunch box, so ask the parents to support in doing this.

#### **Additionally:**

**It is very unlikely a choking incident will happen. Along with trying to take out the risk of it happening using the actions above, send a reminder to staff on the procedure and response if a child is choking.**

- **This is part of first aid training.**
- **A verbal reminder in staff meetings may help.**

Copyright © Essex County Council 2021.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system of any nature, downloaded, transmitted or distributed in any form or by any means including photocopying and recording, without the prior written permission of Essex County Council, the copyright owner.