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Dangerous dogs? Group says it's time for a redesign

By Judy Hevrdejs, Tribune reporter
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Can America build a better hot dog?

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) thinks so. It would like to see the iconic link redesigned.

The hot dog, the AAP says, is a major source of choking among children. In a policy statement, "Prevention of Choking Among Children," issued Monday, the group said choking on food "poses an important and relatively underaddressed problem for U.S. children," particularly those ages 3 and younger.

The dog's not the only troublemaker cited; other foods include hard candy, peanuts, whole grapes, raw carrots, apples, popcorn, chunks of peanut butter, marshmallows and chewing gum.

Asking Mother Nature to tweak the design of grapes and peanuts may be out of the question. But the AAP recommends that food manufacturers "design new food and redesign

existing food to minimize choking risk." And they say foods that pose a high choking risk should get warning labels.

The National Hot Dog & Sausage Council's Janet Riley stood up for encased meat, telling [WGN-AM](#) radio's Greg Jarrett on Monday that many hot dog packages have had labels addressing the issue for about 10 years. Her other suggestion: Sit down, take time and supervise young children while they eat — and if the sausage has a casing, remove it.

The AAP wants the Food and Drug Administration to examine the issue.

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