

Choking/Heimlich Maneuver

Choking occurs when the airway becomes either partially or completely blocked by a foreign object, such as a piece of food or a small toy; by swelling in the mouth or throat; or by fluids, such as vomit or blood. A person who is choking can quickly become unresponsive and die, so it is important to act quickly.

Risk Factors for Choking

Certain behaviors can put a person at risk for choking, such as talking or laughing with the mouth full or eating too fast. Medical conditions (such as a neurological or muscular condition that affects the person's ability to chew, swallow or both) can increase risk of choking. Dental problems, ill fitting dentures that affect the person's ability to chew food properly.

Signs and Symptoms of Choking

A person who is choking typically has a panicked, confused or surprised facial expression. Some people may place one or both hands on their throat. The person may cough (either forcefully or weakly), or he or she may not be able to cough at all. You may hear high-pitched squeaking noises as the person tries to breathe, or nothing at all. If the airway is totally blocked, the person will not be able to speak, cry or cough. The person's skin may initially appear flushed (red), but will become pale or bluish in color as the body is deprived of oxygen.

Emergency Steps

1. Check the scene for safety, form an initial impression, obtain consent and put on PPE as appropriate.
2. Check for signs and symptoms:
 - a. Weak or no cough*
 - b. High-pitched squeaking noises or no sound*
 - c. Pale or blue skin color*
 - d. Unable to cough, speak or cry*
 - e. Panicked, confused, or surprised appearance*
 - f. Holding throat with hand(s)*

**Note: Signs and symptoms "require immediate emergency medical treatment."*

3. Call 9-1-1 and provide immediate emergency medical treatment.

Procedure

1. Position self to the side and slightly behind the choking person (for a smaller person/child, you may need to kneel behind them rather than stand).
2. Give 5 back blows.
 - a. Use the heel of the hand to strike between the shoulder blades.
3. If no improvement, have the person stand up straight.
4. Move behind the person, bend your knees slightly for balance and support.

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5. Give 5 abdominal thrusts.
 - a. Clasp hands together in a fist, pull inward and upward each time.
6. Continue giving 5 back blows and 5 abdominal thrusts.
 - a. Continue until the person can cough, cry, or speak or becomes unresponsive.
7. If the person becomes unresponsive, lower them to a firm, flat surface and begin CPR (starting with compressions),
 - a. After each set of compressions and before attempting breaths:
 - i. Open the person's mouth.
 - ii. Look for any foreign object.
 - iii. If seen, remove it using a finger sweep. NEVER do a finger sweep unless you visually see an object.
8. When first responders arrive and are ready to take over the rescue attempt, step aside and allow them to continue/transfer as needed.

I have read, understand and agree to adhere to the requirements outlined in this policy and procedure.

Administrator Signature: _____

Date: _____

Medical Director Signature: _____

Date: _____

Review Dates: _____

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