



# Choking

Choking is a medical emergency that occurs when a foreign object is stuck in the throat or windpipe, blocking the airway and preventing a person from breathing. Choking can lead to a loss of consciousness or death as oxygen is cut off from the brain. **Call 9-1-1 immediately.**

Signs and symptoms:

- One or both hands clutched to the throat.
- A look of panic, shock or confusion.
- Inability to talk.
- Strained or noisy breathing.
- Squeaky sounds when trying to breathe.
- Cough, which may either be weak or forceful.
- Skin, lips, and nails that change color, turning blue or gray.
- Loss of consciousness.

Adult First Aid:

- If the person can cough forcefully, let them keep coughing. This might naturally dislodge the stuck item.
- If the person can NOT cough, follow these steps:
  - Call 9-1-1
  - Position yourself to the side and slightly behind the choking person.
  - Give 5 back blows. Use the heel of the hand to strike between the shoulder blades.
  - If no improvement, have the person stand up straight.
  - Move behind the person; bend your knees slightly for balance and support.
  - Give abdominal thrusts by first moving behind the person. Stand with your feet well apart and bend your knees slightly for balance and support. Make a fist with one hand and place it just below the ribcage in the middle. Give a quick squeeze, pulling inward and upward each time. Do this 5 times. You can stop before 5 times if the object blocking their breathing is dislodged.
  - Continue giving five back blows and five abdominal thrusts.
  - Continue until the person can cough, cry, or speak or the person becomes unresponsive. If the person becomes unresponsive, lower them to a firm, flat surface and begin CPR (starting with compressions) according to your level of training.



# Choking: Special Circumstances

## Child Choking

- If the child can cough forcefully, let them keep coughing. This might naturally dislodge the stuck item.
- If the person can NOT cough, then follow these steps:
  - Call 9-1-1
  - Position self to the side and slightly behind the choking person. For a small child, you may need to kneel behind them rather than stand.
  - Give 5 back blows. Use the heel of the hand to strike between the shoulder blades.
  - If no improvement, have the person stand up straight.
  - Move behind the person; bend your knees slightly for balance and support.
  - Give 5 abdominal thrusts. Pull inward and upward each time. For a child, use gentle yet firm pressure to avoid damaging the internal organs.
  - Continue giving five back blows and five abdominal thrusts.
  - Continue until the child can cough, cry, or speak or the child becomes unresponsive. If the child becomes unresponsive, lower them to a firm, flat surface and begin CPR (starting with compressions) according to your level of training.

## Infant Choking (younger than one year)

- Sit and hold the infant face down on your forearm. Rest your forearm on your thigh. Hold the infant's chin and jaw to support the head. Place the head lower than the trunk.
- Thump the infant gently but firmly five times on the middle of the back. Use the heel of your hand. Point your fingers up so that you don't hit the back of the infant's head. Gravity and the back thumps should release the blockage.
- Turn the infant face up on your forearm if breathing hasn't started. Rest your arm on your thigh. Place the infant's head lower than the trunk.
- Give five gentle but firm chest compressions with your fingers. Place two fingers just below the nipple line. Press down about 1 1/2 inches. Let the chest rise between each compression.
- Repeat the back thumps and chest compressions if breathing doesn't start. Call for emergency medical help.
- Begin infant CPR if the airway is clear but the infant doesn't start breathing.

## Choking – By Yourself

Call 9-1-1 right away!

- Place a fist slightly above your navel.
- Grasp your fist with the other hand.
- Bend over a hard surface. A countertop or chair will do.
- Shove your fist inward and upward