

Choking

Definition:

Choking is the inability to inhale and exhale due to blocking of the trachea. The air cannot enter the lungs; it is an urgent medical case.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Blue face and extremities
- Inability to talk or even cry
- Fragile cough and breathing difficulties
- Gasping, pauses in breathing and sudden awakenings

Treatment:

Age: above one year

Consider doing the following steps when treating someone unable to talk or breathe and having a throat obstruction:

- Give five "back blows" between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand.
- Check the oral cavity and take out any observable obstruction.
- Give five "abdominal thrusts" if the obstruction persists.
- You can start the abdominal thrusts by standing behind the person, creating a fist with one hand and placing it under his/her rib cage and over his/her waist. Then you encircle his/her waist by placing your other hand on top of your fist. You do a sequence of 5 to 10 separate thrusts upward and inward with enough force to remove the blocking object; then check the mouth directly after every one.
- If the obstruction is still present after four cycles of back blows and abdominal thrusts, call 140 for Red Cross and keep on repeating the cycles until help arrives.
- Medical consultation is needed after "back blows" and "abdominal thrusts" cycles.

Age: Less than one year

If the baby can breathe or cry, this can be a mild obstruction that will probably clear without further assistance.

Watch the baby and ensure that his/her condition doesn't get worse.

If the baby cannot breathe or cry, this is a major case of choking. Follow the instructions below:

- Place the baby face down over your forearm
- Provide up to five back blows between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand.
- Check the baby's mouth immediately after every one and take out any obstruction.
- Rotate the baby on his/her back and give up to five chest thrusts. If the obstruction persists, then recheck the mouth.
- Chest thrusts are done by placing two fingers in the middle of the chest and pushing inward and upward.
- If the obstruction is still present after three cycles of back blows and chest thrusts, dial 140 for the Red Cross.
- Continue doing the cycles of back blows and chest thrusts until medical help reaches your destination.
- A baby who has been given chest thrusts needs medical consultation.