

Choking

Definition:

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

Signs and Symptoms:

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

Treatment:

Adult and child (over 1 year old) with partial choking – conscious:

- Encourage the person to cough forcefully to clear the obstruction on his or her own.

Adult and child (over 1 year old) with complete choking – conscious

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

- Repeat cycles of five back blows (slaps) followed by five “abdominal thrusts” until the object is expelled or the person becomes unresponsive. (Abdominal thrust or Heimlich maneuver: stand or kneel behind the person and wrap your arms around the person’s waist. Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb side of your fist against the person’s abdomen, in the midline, slightly above the navel, and well below the breastbone. Grasp your fist with your other hand and press your fist into the person’s abdomen with a quick, forceful upward thrust).
- If the person is pregnant or obese, perform chest thrusts instead of abdominal thrusts.
- If LifeVac is available, tilt the person’s head and place the mask over the nose and mouth, ensuring a good seal. Push down on the handle, then quickly pull up.

Adult and child (over 1 year old) Choking - unconscious

- Lower the person to the ground if he or she becomes unresponsive.
- Open the airway by head tilt, chin lift, and check inside the mouth for the object.
- If the object is not visible, begin chest compressions without checking for a pulse.
- Give 30 compressions to two ventilations.
- Every time you inspect the mouth, check for the presence of a foreign object. If you observe any, proceed to remove it with a sweeping motion.
- After about 5 cycles or 2 minutes of CPR, activate the emergency response system if someone has not already done so or if you are alone.

If the choking person is unresponsive when you arrive, you may not know if a foreign-body airway obstruction exists. In this case, activate the emergency response system and begin CPR.