

HEIMLICH MANEUVER

The Heimlich maneuver is an emergency technique for preventing suffocation when a person's airway becomes blocked by a piece of food or other object.

You can also perform the maneuver on yourself. . The Heimlich maneuver can be used safely on both adults and children, but most experts do not recommend it for infants less than 1 year old.

First Aid

- For a conscious person who is sitting or standing, position yourself behind the person and reach your arms around his or her waist.
- Place your fist, thumb side in, just above the person's navel and grab the fist tightly with your other hand.
- Pull your fist abruptly upward and inward to increase airway pressure behind the obstructing object and force it from the windpipe.
- If the person is conscious and lying on his or her back, straddle the person facing the head. Push your grasped fist upward and inward in a maneuver similar to the one above.

You may need to repeat the procedure several times before the object is dislodged. If repeated attempts do not free the airway, an emergency cut in the windpipe ([tracheostomy](#) or cricothyrotomy) may be necessary.



Universal sign
for choking

Part 1

Choking is the hindrance of breathing due to an obstruction of the throat or windpipe. The Heimlich maneuver should be conducted to try to dislodge the object.



Place one fist just above the person's navel with your thumb against the abdomen



ADAM.

Part 2

Choking is fairly common. Choking deaths occur most commonly in children less than 3 years old and in senior citizens, but can occur at any age. The Heimlich maneuver has been valuable in saving lives and can be administered by anyone who has learned the technique.

Remove the object with your finger **ONLY if you can see it**



ADAM.

Part 3

Choking is fairly common. Choking deaths occur most commonly in children less than 3 years old and in senior citizens, but can occur at any age. The Heimlich maneuver has been valuable in saving lives and can be administered by anyone who has learned the technique.

Choking Considerations for a conscious adult or child over 1 years old

Considerations

A choking person's airway may be completely or partially blocked, so that not enough oxygen reaches the lungs. A complete blockage is a medical emergency. A partial blockage can quickly become life threatening if the person cannot properly breathe in and out.

Without oxygen, permanent brain damage can occur in as little as 4 - 6 minutes. Rapid first aid for choking can save a life.

Occasionally an object will enter the lung. While the person may appear to improve and breathe normally, in a few days symptoms may develop, such as:

- Persistent cough
- **Pneumonia**
- Wheezing

Causes

- Eating too fast, failing to chew food well enough, or eating with improperly fitted dentures
- Drinking alcohol (even a small amount of alcohol affects awareness)
- Being unconscious and breathing in vomited material
- Breathing in small objects (young children)
- Trauma to the head and face (swelling, blood, or a deformity can cause choking)

Symptoms

The universal distress signal for choking is grabbing the throat with the hand.

Other danger signs include:

- Bluish skin color
- Difficulty breathing
- Inability to speak
- Loss of consciousness if blockage is not cleared
- Noisy breathing or high-pitched sounds while inhaling
- Weak, ineffective coughing

First Aid

How to perform the Heimlich maneuver:

1. First ask, "Are you choking? Can you speak?" DO NOT perform first aid if the person is coughing forcefully and able to speak -- a strong cough can dislodge the object.
2. Stand behind the person and wrap your arms around the person's waist.
3. Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb side of your fist just above the person's navel, well below the breastbone.
4. Grasp the fist with your other hand.
5. Make quick, upward and inward thrusts with your fist.
6. Continue these thrusts until the object is dislodged or the victim loses consciousness.

IF THE PERSON LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS

- Lower the person to the floor.
- Call 911 -- or tell someone to call 911.
- Begin CPR.
- If you see something blocking the airway, try to remove it.

FOR PREGNANT OR OBESE PEOPLE

1. Wrap your arms around the person's CHEST.
2. Place your fist on the MIDDLE of the breastbone between the nipples.
3. Make firm, backward thrusts.

After removing the object that caused the choking, keep the person still and get medical help. Anyone who is choking should have a medical examination.

Complications can occur not only from the choking, but also from the first aid measures that were taken.

Choking considerations for an unconscious adult or child over the age of 1 years old

Considerations

A choking person's airway may be completely or partially blocked so that not enough oxygen reaches the lungs. A complete blockage is a medical emergency. A partial blockage can quickly become life threatening if the person cannot properly breathe.

Without oxygen, permanent brain damage can occur in as little as 4 - 6 minutes. Rapid first aid for [choking](#) can save a life.

Occasionally an object will enter the lung. While the person may appear to improve and breathe normally, in a few days symptoms may develop, such as:

- Persistent cough
- Pneumonia
- Wheezing

If this happens, get medical help right away.

Causes

- Eating too fast, failing to chew food well enough, or eating with poorly fitting dentures
- Drinking alcohol (even a small amount of alcohol affects awareness)
- Being unconscious (a person may breathe in vomited material)
- Breathing in or swallowing small objects (young children)
- Having trauma to the head and face (swelling, bleeding, or deformity can cause choking)

Symptoms

- Bluish color to the lips and nails
- Inability to breathe
- Inability to talk
- Unconsciousness

Do Not

DO NOT try to grasp an object that is lodged in the person's throat. This might push it farther down the airway. If you can see the object in the mouth, it may be removed.

DO NOT begin the chest compressions of CPR (if heartbeat has stopped) until the airway is cleared.

Call immediately for emergency medical assistance if

Seek medical help right away if someone is found unconscious.

When the person is choking:

- Tell someone to call 911 or the local emergency number while you begin first aid/CPR
- If you are alone, shout for help and begin first aid/CPR

Prevention

Preventing an airway from getting blocked:

- If administering medicine in a pill form; if the individual is unable to swallow the pill without complications it may need to be cut or ground up to ensure safe ingestion.
- Cut food into small pieces.
- Chew food slowly and well.
- Do not give foods such as peanuts and popcorn to small children, or anyone who cannot chew well.
- Always be aware of warnings on toys that say they may be a choking hazard.
- Do not talk or laugh while chewing and swallowing food.
- Make sure individuals are properly positioned while eating.
- Make sure individuals that present with difficulties with swallowing (dysphagia) have a licensed Speech and Language Pathologist complete a comprehensive evaluation.
- Some individuals with significant swallowing issues may require a Barium Swallow study to be performed by licensed clinician in a healthcare setting.

Follow Up Care After A Choking Incident

Choking can be an extremely traumatic occurrence. Individuals who are medically fragile should receive medical attention after a choking episode from qualified professionals. Appropriate recommendations can be made for specific diagnostic testing that could further prevent future choking, breathing or swallowing difficulties.

Choking can cause other complications:

- Head Injuries
- Internal Lacerations
- Cracked Ribs
- Brain Damage

References: *My Optimum Health.com*
Ehow.com
Firstaid.com