

Choking

Care Provider Bulletin

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Foods Commonly Associated with Choking

Apples
Bananas
Carrots
Crackers
Grapefruit sections
Grapes
Marshmallows
Meat (particularly hot dogs)
Orange slices
Pasta
Peanut Butter
Pineapple chunks
Pizza
Popcorn
Potato Chips
Potatoes (particularly French fries)
Rice

Did you Know?

Choking is the fourth leading cause of death by unintentional injury. Meat is the leading cause of choking incidents (particularly hot dogs).

What is Choking?

Choking is caused by food or small objects getting caught in the throat and blocking the airway. This keeps oxygen from getting to the lungs and brain. If the brain goes without oxygen for more than four minutes, it can result in brain damage or death.

Who is at Increased Risk?

- People with dentures
- People who have difficulty swallowing
- People with eating problems (eating too fast or without chewing)
- People with mouth and dental problems that affect chewing
- People with a history of choking

Common Causes of Choking

- Eating too fast
- Being distracted while eating
- Not being supervised appropriately while eating, when assessed to be necessary
- Placing too much food in one's mouth
- Poor oral motor skills
- Incorrect diet texture
- Not cutting food to the appropriate size
- Not communicating diet needs to new staff
- Eating something with two or more diet textures (such as cereal and milk, or a hotdog and a soft drink)



How to Respond to a Choking Victim

- If the person is coughing forcefully, encourage them to continue coughing to clear the object
- A person who cannot cough, speak, or breathe needs immediate help

Heimlich Maneuver

- Send someone to call 9-1-1
- Lean person forward and give 5 back blows with heel of your hand
- Give 5 quick abdominal thrusts by placing the thumb side of your fist against the middle of the victim's abdomen, just above the navel
- Grab your fist with the other hand
- Repeat until the object the person is choking on is forced out and person breathes or coughs on their own
- If the victim is or becomes unresponsive, lower them to the ground, expose the chest, and start CPR



CPR for Adult Victims

- Open airway and give 2 rescue breaths
- Compress chest 30 times
- Give 2 rescue breaths
- Compress chest 30 times
- Continue cycles of 2 breaths and 30 compressions

CPR for Child & Infant Victims

- Kneel beside the child or baby
- For children, place the heel of one hand on the center of the chest, then place the heel of the other hand on top of the first hand, and lace your fingers together
- Deliver 30 quick compressions that are each about 2 inches deep
- For infants, use 2 fingers to deliver 30 quick compressions that are each about 1.5 inches deep
- Give 2 rescue breaths
- Keep going
- Continue these baby or child CPR steps until you see obvious signs of life, like breathing, or until an AED is ready to use, another trained responder or EMS professional is available to take over, you're too exhausted to continue, or the scene becomes unsafe

Report the choking incident to the person's doctor, even if they have stabilized

What Can You Do to Prevent Choking?

- Is there a history of choking? Make sure the person has a plan that outlines any food or beverage guidelines as recommended by their doctor. Follow the plan!
- Encourage the person to sit up straight, with their head slightly forward

Children

- Keep small objects out of children's reach.
- Cut food into small pieces
- Supervise young children while eating and playing
- Do not give them hard candy

More information:

National Safety Council

<http://www.nsc.org>

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr/performing-cpr>

US National Library of Medicine

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/choking.html>