

CHOKING ADULT, CHILD AND INFANT

Someone is choking.
Do you know what to do?



The advice on this page is not designed to replace formal First Aid training.

Your first call for First Aid
0300 4 666 999
www.firstaid.org.uk

RECOGNITION

1. The person can't breathe as their airway is blocked by food or foreign object.
2. They may become red in the face and neck, clutch at their throat, or point to their mouth.
3. Most choking incidents are fairly minor and can be relieved by coughing alone. If the blockage is severe, coughing may not clear the obstruction so the person needs help.

YOUR AIMS

1. To remove the obstruction.
2. To arrange urgent removal to hospital if necessary.

CAUTION

If at any stage the person loses consciousness, open the airway and check for breathing. If the person is not breathing, begin CPR to try to relieve the obstruction.



If an adult is choking

1. Ask "Are you choking?"
2. If they are, encourage the person to cough and remove any obvious obstruction from the mouth.
3. If the person is unable to speak or stops coughing or breathing normally:
 - Bend the person forward, keeping the head lower than the chest if possible.
 - Give up to 5 back blows between the shoulder blades using the heel of the hand, supporting the chest with your other hand and watching to see if the object is expelled.
 - Check the mouth; remove any obvious obstruction.
4. If back blows fail:
 - From behind the person place a fist, thumb inwards, on the abdomen midway between the bottom of the breastbone and the belt line.
 - Cover your fist with the other hand. With the person bending forward, pull inwards and upwards firmly, but not violently.
 - Give up to 5 abdominal thrusts.
 - Check the mouth; remove any obvious obstruction.
 - If the obstruction has not cleared, repeat up to three cycles of back blows and abdominal thrusts checking the mouth after each cycle.

If the person becomes unconscious or the obstruction has not cleared after three cycles, dial 999/112 for an ambulance. Continue with back blows/abdominal thrusts until help arrives or the person becomes unconscious. If the person becomes unconscious, open the airway and check for breathing. If not breathing, give 30 chest compressions followed by 2 rescue breaths.

If a child is choking

1. For a choking child who is conscious:
 - Ask "Are you choking?"
 - Encourage the child to cough.
2. If the child is unable to speak or stops coughing or breathing normally:
 - Bend the child well forward.
 - Give up to 5 back blows between the shoulder blades using the heel of the hand, watching to see if the object is expelled.
 - Check the mouth; remove any obvious obstruction.
3. If back blows fail:
 - Stand behind the child and place a fist, thumb inwards, on the abdomen mid way between the bottom of the breastbone and the belt line.
 - Cover your fist with the other hand. With the child bending well forward, pull inwards and upwards firmly, but not violently.
 - Give up to 5 abdominal thrusts.
 - Check the mouth; remove any obvious obstruction.
 - If the obstruction has not cleared, repeat up to three cycles of back blows and abdominal thrusts checking the mouth after each cycle.
 - If the obstruction has not cleared after three cycles, dial 999/112 for an ambulance.
 - Continue until help arrives or the child becomes unconscious.

If the child becomes unconscious, open the airway and check for breathing. If not breathing, give 5 initial rescue breaths. If you cannot achieve effective rescue breaths give 30 chest compressions (the aim is to relieve the obstruction) then 2 rescue breaths.

If an infant is choking

1. If the infant is unable to cry, cough or breathe:
 - Lay the infant face down along your forearm, keep the head low and support the back and head.
 - With the heel of your hand give up to 5 back blows.
 - Check the infant's mouth and remove any obvious obstructions. Do not do a finger sweep of the mouth.
2. If back blows fail:
 - Turn the infant onto his or her back and give up to 5 chest thrusts. Use two fingers, push inwards and upwards (towards the head) against the infant's breastbone, one finger's breadth below the nipple line.
 - The aim is to remove the obstruction with each chest thrust rather than necessarily doing all five.
 - Check the mouth.

If the obstruction does not clear after three cycles of back blows and chest thrusts, take the infant with you and dial 999/112 for an ambulance. Continue until help arrives or the infant becomes unconscious.