

FIRST AID – HOW TO DEAL WITH CHOKING

Choking happens when something gets stuck in a person's throat and they cannot breathe. Unless the blockage is removed, they may become unconscious and die.

WHAT TO DO IF A PERSON IS CHOKING

To help an adult (including elderly people) or a child more than one year old:

1 ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO COUGH

If the person is able to speak, cough, cry and breathe, their airway is only partially blocked. They will usually be able to clear the blockage themselves.

- Encourage the person to keep coughing.

If coughing does not work, give the person back blows (Step 2).



2 SLAP THE OBJECT OUT

If the choking is severe, the person will not be able to speak, cry, cough or breathe.

- Bend the person forward at the waist.
- Use the heel of your hand to give the person five firm blows in the middle of the back, between the shoulder blades. (The heel of your hand is the part between your palm and wrist.)

If this does not work, move on to abdominal thrusts (Step 3).

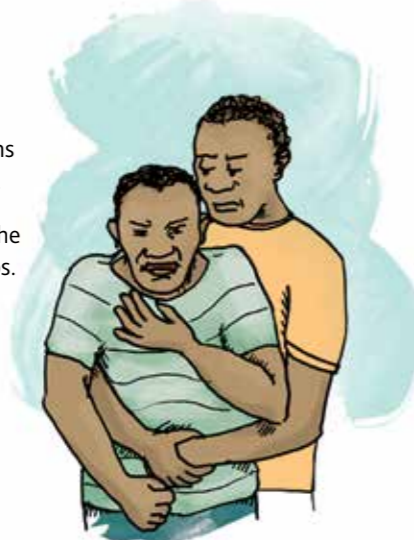


3 SQUEEZE THE OBJECT OUT

If the person is still choking, perform abdominal thrusts:

- Stand behind the person, wrap your arms around their waist and bend them forward.
- Clench one fist and place it just above the person's belly button (navel), below the ribs.
- Place your other hand over your clenched fist. Pull sharply inwards and upwards.
- Do this up to five times, until the object is forced out or the person can cough and breathe again.

▶ **Please note:** Do not give abdominal thrusts to pregnant women or babies under one year old.



4 CALL FOR EMERGENCY HELP

If abdominal thrusts do not work, call for emergency help.

- Continue giving five back blows followed by five abdominal thrusts until help arrives.

WHAT TO DO IF A BABY IS CHOKING

For babies under one year old, follow this advice:

1 SLAP THE OBJECT OUT



If the baby is not able to cry, cough or breathe:

- Hold the baby face-down along your thigh with the head lower than the baby's bottom. Support the head from underneath.
- Give up to five firm slaps to the baby's back between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand.

2 CHECK THE MOUTH



- Check to see if the blockage has cleared. Carefully pick out any objects you can clearly see.
- If the back blows have not removed the object and the baby is still choking, move on to chest thrusts (Step 3).

3 SQUEEZE THE OBJECT OUT



If the baby is still choking, perform chest thrusts:

- Lie the baby face-up along your arm, supporting the back of the head with your hand.
- Place two fingers in the middle of the baby's chest just below the nipples.
- Push sharply downwards up to five times.
- Check the mouth and carefully pick out any objects.

4 CALL FOR EMERGENCY HELP

If the blockage has not cleared, call for emergency help, taking the baby with you.

- Continue giving five back blows followed by five chest thrusts until help arrives.

FURTHER RESOURCES

App: Free first aid apps are now available for smartphone users. Use your phone to search for an app provided by the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society or St John Ambulance. Some countries' Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies have produced their own app.

Video: To watch a short video showing how to respond to choking, visit www.redcross.org.uk and click on 'What we do' followed by 'First aid', 'Everyday first aid' and 'Choking'.

Information taken from the *St John Ambulance website (www.sja.org.uk)* and the *UK's National Health Service website (www.nhs.uk)*.