



Essentials of Community Risk Reduction

Preventing Suffocation and Choking Tip Sheet

Reducing the Risk for Children

Choking can be prevented

- Keep small objects out of reach.
- Cut food into small pieces.
- Supervise children when they are eating.
- Make sure children are seated while eating.
- Follow age guidelines that take into account the safety of a toy based on any possible choking hazard.
- Don't let young children play with toys designed for older children.

The following foods are choking hazards. Do not give them to children younger than 4 years:

- Hot dogs
- Nuts and seeds
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Whole grapes
- Hard or sticky candy
- Popcorn
- Chunks of peanut butter
- Chunks of raw vegetables
- Chewing gum

Keep other household item choking hazards away from babies and young children:

- Coins
- Buttons
- Toys with small parts
- Toys that can fit entirely in a child's mouth
- Small balls, marbles
- Balloons
- Small hair bows, barrettes, rubber bands
- Pen or marker caps
- Small button-type batteries
- Refrigerator magnets
- Pieces of dog food



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Reducing the Risk for Older Adults

Eating and Drinking

- When eating, chew food slowly and thoroughly, especially if you are wearing dentures.
- Try not to laugh or talk while you are chewing and swallowing.
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol before and during meals.
- Cut food into bite size pieces (dime size).
- Sit upright and as straight as you can for meals.

Know How to Recognize Choking

A person who can't cough, speak or breathe needs immediate help. Know the signs that a person has a blocked airway:

- Bright red or bluish face
- Grabbing of the throat
- Not being able to cough forcefully
- Trouble speaking
- Wheezing or a whistling sound when trying to breathe

Know When and How to Use the Heimlich Maneuver

Before starting the Heimlich maneuver:

- Ask the person if they are choking.
- If they nod yes, ask if they can speak.
 - **Call 911 if the person cannot speak.**
 - Begin the Heimlich maneuver on the person until help arrives.
- If the person can speak, this means the airway is only partly blocked. Tell the person to try and cough to push the object out of the airway.
- If they are unable to respond let them know you will use abdominal thrusts to help.

Adults

If the person can't breathe, cough, or make sounds, then:

- Stand or kneel behind the person and wrap your arms around his or her waist. If the person is standing, place one of your legs between his or her legs so you can support the person if he or she faints.



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- Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb side of your fist against the person's belly, just above the belly button but well below the breastbone.
- Grasp your fist with the other hand. Give a quick upward thrust into the belly. This may cause the object to pop out. You may need to use more force for a large person and less for a child or small adult.
- Repeat thrusts until the object pops out or the person faints.

Children

- Stand behind the child with one leg forward between the child's legs. Move down to their level and keep your head to one side.
- Reach around the abdomen and locate the navel.
- Place the thumb side of your fist against the abdomen just above the navel.
- Grasp your fist with your other hand and thrust inward and upward into the victim's abdomen with quick jerks.
- Continue thrusts until the victim expels the object or becomes unresponsive.

Infants

Clear the airway, and do the following only if the infant cannot cry, cough or breathe:

- Support the infant face down by holding the head in one hand with the torso on your forearm against your thigh.
- Give up to five back slaps between the shoulder blades with the heel of your other hand.
- If the object is not expelled, roll the infant face up, supporting the back of the infant's head with your hand.
- Place two fingers on the breastbone just below the nipple line.
- Give five chest thrusts about one per second about 1 ½ inches deep.
- Continue cycles of five back slaps and five chest thrusts until the object is expelled or the infant becomes unresponsive.
- If the infant becomes unresponsive or is found unresponsive, begin CPR.

Exceptions

For a responsive pregnant victim, or any victim you cannot get your arms around or for whom abdominal thrusts are not effective, give chest thrusts from behind; avoid squeezing the ribs with your arms.



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Reduce the Risk of SIDS & Suffocation for Infants

Safe Sleep Environment

- Babies up to 1 year of age should always be placed on their back to sleep during naps and at night.
- Place your baby to sleep on a firm sleep surface.
- Do not put blankets or pillows between the mattress and fitted sheet.
- Never put your baby to sleep on a water bed, a cushion, or a sheepskin.
- Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that could increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation out of the crib. This includes crib bumpers.
- If your baby falls asleep in a car seat, stroller, swing, infant carrier, or infant sling, he should be moved to a firm sleep surface as soon as possible.
- A firm mattress covered with a tight-fitting crib sheet is all you need to make your baby sleep like a baby.
- Place your baby to sleep in the same room where you sleep but not the same bed.
- Be careful not to fall asleep on a sofa or cushioned chair while holding your baby.
- Share this information with anyone who cares for your baby, including grandparents, family, friends, babysitters, and child care center staff.

Choose a Safe Crib

- Check that your crib meets safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Be aware: If you can fit a can of soda between the slats of a crib, that means a child's head, hand or foot could get stuck.
- If the sides go down, don't use the crib.
- Corner posts of the crib should not stick up more than one-sixteenth of an inch.
- Make sure there are no design cutouts in the headboard or footboard that can cause entrapment or provide a means for the child to climb out.
- If your crib doesn't meet CPSC standards, don't use it.
- If you are getting a used crib, check to see if it has been recalled at www.recalls.gov



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American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement

Infants should sleep in the same bedroom as their parents – but on a separate surface, such as a crib or bassinet, and never on a couch, armchair or soft surface — to decrease the risks of sleep-related deaths.

A Recent Risk to Youth - The Choking Game

Recognize signs that a child may be engaging in the choking game.

- Discussion of the game — including other terms used for it, such as "pass-out game" or "space monkey".
- You see bloodshot eyes or marks on the neck.
- The youth has severe headaches.
- The youth is disorientation after spending time alone.
- Ropes, scarves, and belts are tied to bedroom furniture or doorknobs or found knotted on the floor.
- There is an unexplained presence of items like dog leashes, choke collars and bungee cords.

If you suspect your child is playing the choking game, speak to them about the life-threatening dangers associated with the game and seek additional help if necessary