

# FIRS AIDS: CHOKING

## 1. Introduction.

Medical emergencies can happen every day, in any setting. People are injured in situations like falls or motor-vehicle accidents, or they develop sudden illnesses, such as heart attack or stroke.

You play a major role in making the Emergency Services system work effectively (112). This is a network of community resources, including police, fire and medical personnel—and you.

Early arrival of emergency personnel increases a person's chance of surviving a life-threatening emergency. Calling 1-1-2 is the most important action that you can take.

Your role in the EMS system includes four basic steps:

Step 1: Recognize that an emergency exists.

Step 2: Decide to act. PAS Behaviour (Protect – Alert – Save).

Step 3: Activate the EMS system (Alert).

Step 4: Give care until help takes over (Save).

## 2. Definition

Choking is a medical emergency. When a person is choking, air cannot reach the lungs. If the airways cannot be cleared, death follows rapidly.

Anyone can choke, but choking is more common in children than in adults. Choking is a common cause of accidental death in young children who are apt to put toys or coins in their mouths, then unintentionally inhale them. About 3,000 adults die each year from choking on food.

## 3. Causes, symptoms and treatment:

Although there are three reasons why people may choke (mechanical obstruction, tissue swelling or crushing of the trachea) we focus on mechanical obstruction due to the other needs specific medical treatment.

We can differentiate between incomplete and complete choking.

2.1 Incomplete choking symptoms are:

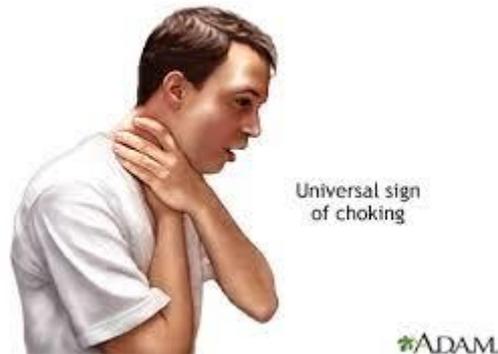
- difficulty breathing
- Agitated and nervous victim
- Energetic and continuous cough
- Sometimes, laboured breathing produces a high-pitched noise.
- Conscious victim

To solve an incomplete choking you should:

- Encourage the victim to continue coughing
- Never hit in the back, these hits may produce a bigger obstruction in airway.
- Cough usually causes expulsion of the foreign body.

## 2.2 Complete choking symptoms are:

- The person can not speak, talk or cough
- The person desperately grabs at his or her throat.
- Conscious victim, but if breathing is not reestablished, he or she may become unconscious.



To solve a complete choking situations it is important to difference between victims: adults, pregnant, very obese person, children and babies under one year.

### Complete choking treatment:

- a. Conscious adult people:
  - Ask for help
  - The rescuer stands behind the victim
  - Hit 5 times with the open hand between scapulas
  - If the object is no ejected, the rescuer makes a fist with one hand, and places it, thumb toward the victim, 4-5 fingers above the navel. The rescuer encircles the victim's waist, placing his other hand on top of the fist.

In a series of 6-10 sharp and distinct thrusts upward and inward, the rescuer attempts to develop enough pressure to force the foreign object back up the trachea. If the manoeuvre fails, it is repeated. It is important not to give up if the first attempt fails. As the victim is deprived of oxygen, the muscles of the trachea relax slightly. Because of this loosening, it is possible that the foreign object may be expelled on a second or third attempt.



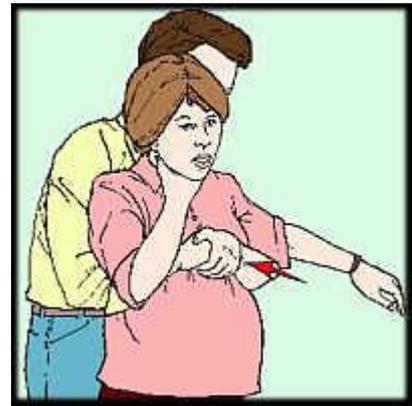
b. Unconscious adult people:

- The rescuer should lay the victim face up on a hard an regular and smooth surface
- Call emergency services: 112
- Start CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation)
- Continue this manoeuvre up to the victim eject the object and recover the autonomy breathing. Look after if victim vomit during the airway clearance.
- The rescuer should place the victim in safety lateral position.



c. Pregnant and very obese people:

- Ask for help
- The rescuer stands behind the victim
- Hit 5 times with the open hand between scapulas
- The rescuer modify the compression place.
- The fists are placed against the middle of the breastbone, and the motion of the chest thrust is in and downward
- If the victim is unconscious, start CPR.



# FIRST AID FOR CHOKING



You must act if there are any signs that a person can't speak, breathe or cough.

- SIGNS**
- Universal choking sign
  - Person cannot breathe, cough or speak
  - Person makes high pitched sounds when breathing
  - Lips and finger nails may become blue

**Ask, "Are you choking?"** If the person gestures yes, stand behind the person, wrapping your arms around the person's waist.



Make a fist with one hand



hold it with the other hand against the person's abdomen



between the navel and lower end of breast bone

Provide quick, upward and inward abdominal thrusts (Heimlich maneuver) until the food or object is forced out.

**If the person becomes unresponsive,**

- Call **112**
- Return to the person
- Lay the person flat on his or her back
- Open his or her mouth
- Remove the object if you see it



- If the object is not seen:
- Tilt his or her head back
  - Begin CPR
  - Look for the object each time you open the airway



- Continue rescue breaths and chest compressions until rescue personnel arrive.

## 4. References

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/choking>

[New York State – Department of Health](#)

[Curso de Primeros auxilios Dirigido a Profesores. CRFP Castilla la Mancha. Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.](#)