

Choking is the obstruction of the airway

Causes of Choking

Obstruction of the airway can be caused by

- Food
- Swallowing foreign objects
- Laughing or crying while eating or drinking
- Running while eating or drinking
- Swallowing food when not chewed enough
- Breathing in while eating or drinking
- Swallowing bone splinters



Signs may include

- Coughing
- Difficulties in breathing
- Face, neck, lips, ears, fingernails turning blue.
- Clutching the throat.
- Unconscious and not breathing.

Treatment of a partial obstruction

Follow the [Basic First Aid Plan](#) to assess the casualty

- Encourage the casualty to relax and take deep breaths.
- Encourage the casualty to try and cough up the obstruction.
- Bend the casualty forward at the waist, to assist with dislodging the obstruction.
- Call an Ambulance immediately if the obstruction is not expelled.

DO NOT:

- ✗ Attempt to dislodge the obstruction with your fingers as this could push the obstruction further down the airway.
- ✗ Use the Heimlich Manoeuvre as this can damage the internal organs.

Treatment of a complete obstruction

Follow the [Basic First Aid Plan](#) to assess the casualty

A complete obstruction is diagnosed by a casualty not being able to breathe, speak or make any sounds.

This can also be recognised as a hand gripping around the throat.

- ✓ Lean the casualty forward and bend them over at the waist.
- ✓ Give up to five (5) hard blows between the shoulder blades, pausing between each blow to see if the obstruction has been dislodged.



If an Ambulance is required - call immediately - do not delay

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- ✓ If the airway is still blocked, give five (5) chest thrusts to the middle of the chest the same as performing chest compressions to try and expel the obstruction, checking after each thrust. This should be done against a hard surface.
- ✓ If the casualty becomes unconscious, perform CPR and call for an Ambulance immediately.

Treatment of an obstruction in an infant or child

Follow the Basic First Aid Plan to assess the casualty

- ✓ A child can be positioned over your knee while you are in the sitting position. This will allow gravity to assist in expelling the object.
- ✓ With the child on your knees, supporting its neck and head, give up to five (5) slaps between their shoulder blades, checking between each back slap to see if the obstruction has been expelled.
- ✓ If the airway is still blocked, give up to five (5) chest thrusts to the middle of the chest the same as performing chest compressions but using two fingers on an infant, to try and expel the obstruction, checking after each thrust.



- ✗ **Do not hold an infant by their legs, as this can pull the infants legs out of the sockets.**

Treatment of an obstruction when alone

- ✓ Rock forcibly backwards against a wall ensuring you do not hit your head. If this doesn't work then place your abdomen over the back of a chair and force downwards to expel the obstruction .