

Choking Prevention and First Aid for Infants and Children



When children begin crawling, or eating table foods, parents must be aware of the dangers and risks of choking. Older infants and children less than 5 years of age can easily choke on food and small objects.

Choking occurs when food or small objects get caught in the throat and block the airway. This prevents oxygen from getting to the lungs and the brain. When the brain goes without oxygen for more than 4 minutes, brain damage or even death may occur. Many children die from choking each year. Most children who choke to death are younger than 5 years of age. Two thirds of choking victims are infants younger than 1 year of age.

Balloons, balls, marbles, pieces of toys, and foods cause the most choking deaths.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that parents and other caregivers can prevent choking. The Academy offers the following choking prevention and first aid information for parents and caregivers of infants and children.

Dangerous foods

Do not feed children younger than 4 years of age any round, firm food unless it is chopped completely. Round, firm foods are common choking dangers. When infants and young children do not grind or chew their food well, they may attempt to swallow it whole. The following foods can be choking hazards:

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

Dangerous household items

Keep the following household items away from infants and children:

- Latex balloons
- Coins
- Marbles
- Toys with small parts
- Toys that can be compressed to fit entirely into a child's mouth
- Small balls
- Pen or marker caps
- Small button-type batteries
- Medicine syringes

What you can do to prevent choking

- *Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)* (basic life support).
- *Be aware that balloons pose a choking risk* to children of any age.
- *Keep the above foods from children* until 4 years of age.
- *Insist that children eat at the table*, or at least while sitting down. They should never run, walk, play, or lie down with food in their mouths.
- *Cut food for infants and young children* into pieces no larger than one-half inch and teach them to chew their food well.
- *Supervise mealtime* for infants and young children.
- *Be aware of older children's actions.* Many choking incidents occur when older brothers or sisters give dangerous foods, toys, or small objects to a younger child.
- *Avoid toys with small parts* and keep other small household items out of reach of infants and young children.
- *Follow the age recommendations on toy packages.* Age guidelines reflect the safety of a toy based on any possible choking hazard as well as the child's physical and mental abilities at various ages.
- *Check under furniture and between cushions* for small items that children could find and put in their mouths.
- *Do not let infants and young children play with coins.*

First aid for the child who is choking

Make a point to learn the instructions on the reverse side of this brochure. Post the chart in your home. However, these instructions should *not* take the place of an approved class in basic first aid, CPR, or emergency prevention. Contact your local American Red Cross office or the American Heart Association to find out about classes offered in your area. Most of the classes teach basic first aid, CPR, and emergency prevention along with what to do for a choking infant or child. Your pediatrician also can help you understand these steps and talk to you about the importance of supervising mealtime and identifying dangerous foods and objects.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

American Academy
of Pediatrics



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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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CHOKING/CPR

LEARN AND PRACTICE CPR

IF ALONE WITH A CHILD WHO IS CHOKING...

1. SHOUT FOR HELP.
2. START RESCUE EFFORTS FOR 1 MINUTE.
3. CALL 911 OR AN EMERGENCY NUMBER.

YOU SHOULD START FIRST AID FOR CHOKING IF...

- The child cannot breathe at all (the chest is not moving up and down).
- The child cannot cough, talk, or make a normal voice sound.
- The child is found unconscious. (Go to CPR.)

DO NOT START FIRST AID FOR CHOKING IF...

- The child can breathe, cry, talk, or make a normal voice sound.
- The child can cough, sputter, or move air at all. The child's normal reflexes are working to clear the airway.

FOR INFANTS LESS THAN 1 YEAR OF AGE

INFANT CHOKING

Begin the following if the infant is choking and is unable to breathe.

However, if the infant is coughing, crying, speaking, or able to breathe at all, DO NOT do any of the following. Depending on the infant's condition, call 911 or the pediatrician for further advice.

INFANT CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)

To be used when the infant is unconscious or when breathing stops.



ALTERNATING



Alternate back blows and chest thrusts until the object is dislodged or the infant becomes unconscious. If the infant becomes unconscious, begin CPR.

(Health care professionals only: assess pulse before starting CPR.)

1 OPEN AIRWAY

- Look for movement of the chest and abdomen.
- Listen for sounds of breathing.
- Feel for breath on your cheek.
- Open airway as shown.
- Look for a foreign object in the mouth. If you can see an object in the infant's mouth, sweep it out carefully with your finger. Do not try a finger sweep if the object is in the infant's throat, because it could be pushed further into the throat.

2 RESCUE BREATHING

- Position head and chin with both hands as shown — head gently tilted back, chin lifted.
- Seal your mouth over the infant's mouth and nose.
- Blow gently, enough air to make chest rise and fall 2 times.

If no rise or fall, repeat 1 & 2. If no response, treat for blocked airway. (See "INFANT CHOKING" steps 1 & 2 at left.)

3 ASSESS RESPONSE

- Place your ear next to the infant's mouth and look, listen, and feel for normal breathing or coughing.
 - Look for body movement.
- If you cannot see, hear, or feel signs of normal breathing, coughing, or movement, start chest compressions.

4 CHEST COMPRESSIONS

- Place 2 fingers of one hand over the lower half of the chest. Avoid the bottom tip of the breastbone.
- Compress chest $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1" deep.
- Alternate 5 compressions with 1 breath.
- Compress chest 100 times per minute.

Check for signs of normal breathing, coughing, or movement every minute.

If at any time an object is coughed up or the infant/child starts to breathe, call 911 or the pediatrician for further advice.

Ask the pediatrician for information on Choking/CPR instructions for children older than 8 years of age and on an approved first aid course or CPR course in your community.

CHOKING/CPR

LEARN AND PRACTICE CPR

IF ALONE WITH A CHILD WHO IS CHOKING...

1. SHOUT FOR HELP. 2. START RESCUE EFFORTS FOR 1 MINUTE. 3. CALL 911 OR AN EMERGENCY NUMBER.

YOU SHOULD START FIRST AID FOR CHOKING IF...

- The child cannot breathe at all (the chest is not moving up and down).
- The child cannot cough, talk, or make a normal voice sound.
- The child is found unconscious. (Go to CPR.)

DO NOT START FIRST AID FOR CHOKING IF...

- The child can breathe, cry, talk, or make a normal voice sound.
- The child can cough, sputter, or move air at all. The child's normal reflexes are working to clear the airway.

FOR CHILDREN 1 TO 8 YEARS OF AGE

CHILD CHOKING

Begin the following if the child is choking and is unable to breathe. However, if the child is coughing, crying, speaking, or able to breathe at all, DO NOT do any of the following, but call the pediatrician for further advice.

CONSCIOUS



If the child becomes unconscious, begin CPR.

CHILD CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)

To be used when the child is UNCONSCIOUS or when breathing stops.

1 OPEN AIRWAY

- Look for movement of the chest and abdomen.
- Listen for sounds of breathing.
- Feel for breath on your cheek.
- Open airway as shown.

Look for a foreign object in the mouth. If you can see an object in the child's mouth, sweep it out carefully with finger. Do not try a finger sweep if the object is in the child's throat because it could be pushed further into the throat.



2 RESCUE BREATHING

- Position head and chin with both hands as shown.
- Seal your mouth over child's mouth.
- Pinch child's nose.
- Blow enough air to make child's chest rise and fall 2 times.



2A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS ONLY:

- Use abdominal thrusts to try to remove an airway obstruction.
- Continue steps 1, 2, and 2A until the object is retrieved or rescue breaths are effective.
- Assess pulse before starting CPR.

If no rise or fall, repeat 1 & 2. If still no rise or fall, continue with step 3 (below).

3 ASSESS RESPONSE

- Place your ear next to the child's mouth and look, listen, and feel for normal breathing or coughing.
- Look for body movement.

If you cannot see, hear, or feel signs of normal breathing, coughing, or movement, start chest compressions.



4 CHEST COMPRESSIONS

- Compress chest 1" to 1½".
- Alternate 5 compressions with 1 breath.
- Compress chest 100 times per minute.

Press with the heel of 1 hand on the lower half of the chest. Lift fingers to avoid ribs. Do not press near the bottom tip of the breastbone.



Be sure someone calls 911 as soon as possible, and by 1 minute after starting rescue efforts.

If at any time an object is coughed up or the infant/child starts to breathe, call 911 or the pediatrician for further advice.

Ask the pediatrician for information on Choking/CPR instructions for children older than 8 years of age and on an approved first aid course or CPR course in your community.