

Choking skills



The following steps are best suited for able-bodied learners. You may need to adapt them to suit people with diverse needs in order to achieve the aims.

Adult and child

Back blows

Aim: To give the choking person firm blows between the shoulder blades, creating vibration and pressure in their airway which may dislodge the object and enable them to breathe again.

Give up to five back blows.

1. Stand behind the person placing one hand on their chest for support.
2. Bend the person forward.
3. Using the heel of your other hand, give up to five sharp back blows between the shoulder blades.
4. After each back blow, check to see if the airway is clear.

Abdominal thrusts

Aim: To squeeze the air out of the lungs, creating pressure in the airway which may dislodge the object and enable the person to breathe again.

If the five back blows are unsuccessful, give up to five abdominal thrusts.

1. Stand behind the person, bend them forward and wrap both your arms around their waist.
2. Make a fist and place it between the belly button and the base of the ribs. Place your other hand on top of your fist.
3. Pull sharply inwards and upwards giving up to five abdominal thrusts, checking to see if the airway is clear after each one.

If the airway is still blocked, access EMS immediately and continue alternating between five back blows and five abdominal thrusts.

Adaptation for obese or pregnant people

For obese or pregnant people, instead of abdominal thrusts, use chest thrusts. On adults or children, these are similar to abdominal thrusts but stand behind the person and place your fist against the centre of the person's breastbone. Then place your other hand on top of your fist and give quick thrusts into the chest.

Choking skills



Baby

Back blows

Aim: To give the choking baby a firm blow on their back between the shoulder blades, creating vibration and pressure in their airway which may dislodge the object and enable them to breathe again.

Give up to five back blows.

1. Sit or kneel holding the baby.
2. Place the baby face down on your lap (the head should be lower than the body) and support their chin with your hand. Be careful not to compress the area under the chin.
3. Using the heel of your other hand, give up to five sharp blows between their shoulder blades.
4. After each back blow, check to see if their airway is clear.

Chest thrusts

Aim: To squeeze the air out of the lungs, creating pressure in the airway which may dislodge the object and enable the baby to breathe again.

If the five back blows are unsuccessful, give up to five chest thrusts.

1. Support the baby's head and turn the baby to face upwards. The baby's back should now be on your forearm or lap. Their head should be lower than their body.
2. Place two fingers or thumbs in the middle of their chest just below the nipple line and give up to five chest thrusts (approximately one-third of the depth of the chest).

If the airway is still blocked, access EMS immediately and continue alternating between five back blows and five chest thrusts.