

Worksheet: Choking

This worksheet is aimed at teachers or educators for first aid activities in schools. It can be used with children and teenagers (please see the [educational pathway](#) for children for more information). Background information are available in this worksheet, but the technical content can be reviewed using the International first aid, resuscitation and education guidelines of the Global first aid reference centre available online [here](#) or the [Basic first aid manual for Africa](#), edited by the Belgian Red Cross, Flanders.

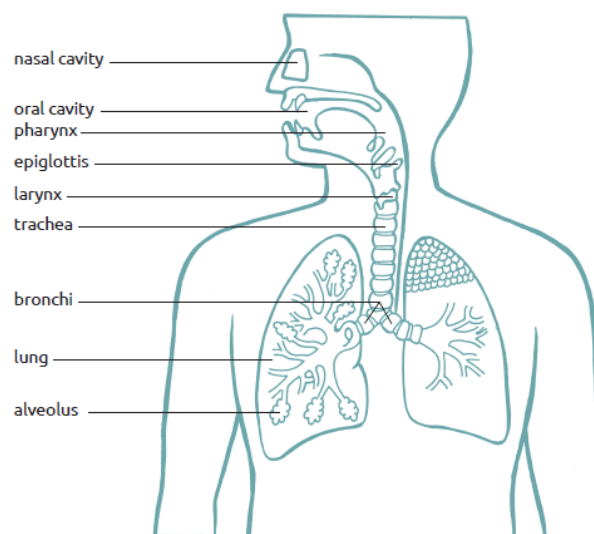
Reflective discussion (sharing experiences)

Objectives:	The students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> can make the distinction between mild and severe choking
Preparation time:	None
Time for this method:	10 minutes
Aids used:	None

Procedure:

Almost everybody has choked at some time. Usually this is not serious. This means that the young people may already have some prior knowledge on this subject. In this light, preferably use the young people's experiences as a starting point. The following questions can be used to guide the discussion:

- What was happening? Was the person coughing or trying to cough? Was he able to speak? Could he/she still breathe?
- Is choking serious? *Often it is not. Make reference to the respiratory system here: if the airway is completely closed, breathing will become difficult or even impossible. That is a life-threatening situation.*
- What would you do in this case? *Get the young people to give a few examples of what they could do to help somebody who is choking.*
- *Point out that not all the examples provided are actually effective. Establish a connection with the next stage of the lesson, in which you will explain the appropriate method.*



Storytelling

Objectives:	The students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can make the distinction between mild and severe choking • can provide first aid in case of choking
Preparation time:	None
Time for this method:	10 minutes
Aids used:	Photo bellow

Procedure:

- Read out the story here below. Feel free to change the name of the child, and the lunch he's eating, to fit your specific context.

It is lunch break at school. The students sit outside at the table. The weather is beautiful. John eats bread. He also has an apple to eat. The apple is already cut into pieces, that's easy.

During the meal there is a lot of chatting and laughing at the tables. At the table of John, there are 6 boys. They tell jokes to each other. The boys laugh very loud. The lunch break is perhaps the best time of the day.

Suddenly John starts coughing. The other boys laugh. They think John is making a joke. They no longer hear him cough, but John keeps on pretending to cough - it looks like he's coughing without sound. John swings his arms. The boys ask him if he feels well? John does not answer. He grabs his chest with one hand. He is panicking. The other boys do not know what to do at all. John looks like he cannot breathe anymore!

What to do now?

- What did John do?
- Summarize explaining that the first-aider asks: "Are you choking?" and then takes action based on the other person's response.
- Then encourage this person to keep coughing.
- Ask the students: "What happens if the person is not responding – what should you do then?"
- Reiterate the distinction between mild and severe choking.

Mild choking	Severe choking
The person is trying to cough something up. He can answer, cough or breathe.	The person is trying to cough something up. He cannot speak or make any sound. He puts his hands on his throat. His lips and tongue start to turn blue. The veins in his face and neck stick out. He becomes dizzy and loses consciousness.





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Practical demonstration

Objectives:	The students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can provide first aid in case of choking
Preparation time:	None
Time for this method:	10 minutes
Aids used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo bellow • Photo bellow

CAUTION

- In the case of blows to the back, only the movement and location of the blows will be practiced. Make clear to the young people that for safety reasons and to prevent injury, **in this lesson** there must be **no actual blows to the back**.
- Similarly, they will **not practice abdominal thrusts on other students** as these too could cause injury. Instead, only the movement and location of these thrusts will be practiced. Make it clear that anybody receiving abdominal thrusts must always consult a doctor to see if these have caused any injury.

Procedure:

Explain when blows to the back are used as a technique to help somebody who is choking. Explain when abdominal thrusts are used as a technique to help somebody who is choking. Demonstrate both techniques step by step on a student.

You can choose to get the students to practice these techniques on each other. If you do so, you need to allow for more time for this part of the lesson. In this case, divide the students into groups of three. Make sure that each group is made up of an ill or injured person, a first-aider and an observer.

If appropriate, show the students the photos from pages below.



What should you do?

Ask the ill person: "Are you choking?"

There are two options:

1. He/she can answer, cough or breathe

- Tell him/her to keep coughing.
- Do not do anything else.
- Stay with him/her until he breathes normally again.



2. He/she cannot speak, cough or breathe

- Give 5 blows to the back.
- After each blow, check if the object is still stuck, by making eye contact.
- If the ill person can breathe again, stop giving blows to the back.
- Give 5 thrusts to the abdomen.
- If he is still choking, switch between 5 blows to the back and 5 abdominal thrusts until the person is speaking, breathing or coughing.
- If he loses consciousness, carefully place him/her on the ground*.
- Seek help and call Emergency services.*
- If the person is not breathing, immediately start cardiopulmonary resuscitation.*

*check if those situations are appropriate for your audience.



Technique: Blow to the back

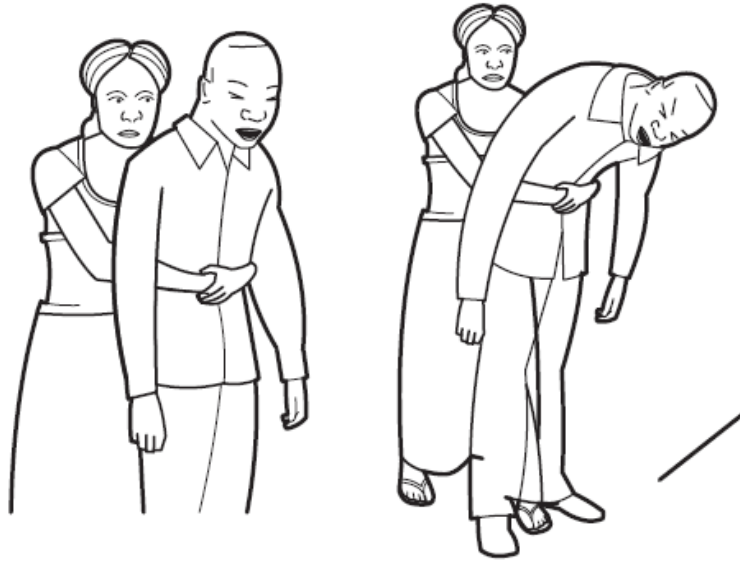
- Stand to the side and a little behind the ill person.
- Support his chest with one hand and bend him well forward. In this way, the object will come out if dislodged and will not move deeper down the airway.
- Give 5 sharp blows between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand. Each blow should be intended to dislodge the object.
- Check to see if the object has moved or comes out (when this happens, the ill person will be able to speak, cough and breathe again). If so, stop the blows immediately.





Technique: Abdominal thrusts

- Stand behind the ill person and wrap both arms around him.
- Make a fist with one hand and place it between his belly button and the lower tip of the breastbone.
- Place your other hand on top of your fist, gripping the back of your hand and wrist.
- Bend the ill person forward and pull your fist strongly towards you and upwards, 5 times.
- If the person will be able to speak, cough and breathe again stop immediately the abdominal thrusts.







About the Global First Aid Reference Centre

- Founded in 2012
- Centre of excellence of the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#) (IFRC) hosted by the [French Red Cross](#)
- Collaborates with 192 National Societies (Red Cross, Red Crescent) as well as scientific, institutional and private partners.

Our objectives are to reduce the number of deaths and the severity of injuries as well as to make people and communities more resilient using first aid. To achieve this, we work closely with National Societies to facilitate knowledge sharing between them and to promote first aid education at the global level. In order to ensure that first aid techniques are relevant to any country and any situation, we participate in numerous studies undertaken by medical doctors, scientists and researchers.

Find out more about the Centre on our [website](#).

