

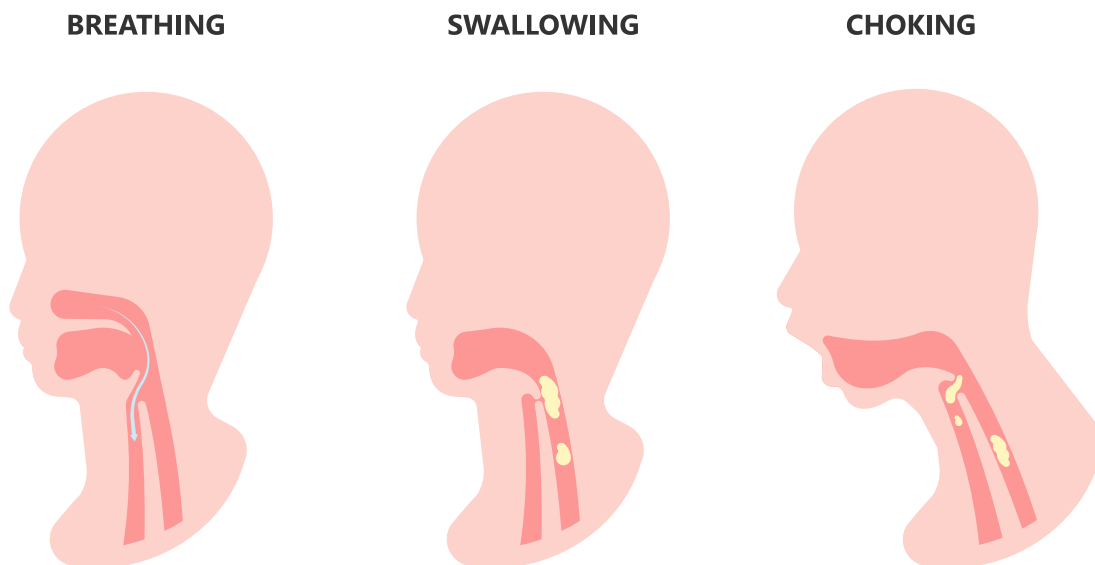
# How to Handle Any Choking Emergency

Choking is a traumatic experience that can claim a life very quickly. If someone is choking, another person's intervention is needed to clear their airway and save their life. Most common in children and the elderly, choking can happen suddenly and silently, and brain damage can occur within minutes.

Knowing what to do if someone is choking means you're equipped to act fast and help the person remove the obstruction.

## How Choking Damages the Body

Choking describes a blockage in the airway, which can be partial or total. When a person chokes, their body's vital organs are deprived of oxygen, leading to potential permanent brain damage within minutes. As with cardiac arrest, a victim's survival chances diminish rapidly as time passes, emphasizing the importance of knowing how to act!



## What Is a Partial Airway Obstruction?

When someone is able to cough, breathe, or talk, but still has something stuck in their throat, this is called a partial airway obstruction. In this case, encourage the victim to cough to get the object out. Stay near and consider calling EMS in case the object shifts and completely blocks the airway. If the victim is not able to cough, talk, or breathe then the Heimlich maneuver is needed.

# The Universal Sign for Choking

When someone is choking, they can't speak and will be panicking. The universal sign for choking — grabbing the throat with both hands — surpasses language barriers and is a quick, clear, and effective signal. Recognizing this sign is crucial for acting promptly to clear the obstruction.



## What to Do If an Adult Is Choking

The Heimlich maneuver is the top life-saving technique for adults. To perform the Heimlich maneuver, follow these steps:

1. **Ask the person, "Are you choking?"** Pay attention to their body language. If they indicate yes, tell them you're going to help.
2. **Position yourself behind the person.** Wrap your arms around their waist and place one foot forward between the victim's feet to have a strong stance.
3. **Make a fist** with one hand and place your thumb against the person's abdomen, just above their belly button.
4. **Grasp your fist with your other hand.** Thrust inward and upward into the person's abdomen.
5. **Continue thrusts** until the object dislodges and the person can breathe or until the victim becomes unresponsive.



If a pregnant woman is choking, use chest thrusts instead of abdominal thrusts to avoid injuring the fetus. Target the lower half of the sternum, as if performing CPR, to create enough force to dislodge the object.



## What to Do If a Child Is Choking

When a child is choking, quick action is vital. If a child can't cough, speak, or breathe, follow these steps:

1. **Stay calm and inform the child that you're going to help.**  
Anxious energy can worsen the situation.
2. **Position yourself behind the child.** Depending on the size of the child, you may need to stand, kneel, or place them on your lap to get the best position.
3. **Perform abdominal thrusts.** Place a fist above the child's belly button, grasp your fist with your other hand, and perform quick inward and upward thrusts.
4. **Continue thrusts** until the object dislodges and the child can breathe or until the child becomes unresponsive.



## What to Do If an Infant Is Choking

The Heimlich maneuver shouldn't be used on a choking infant under a year old, [per AHA recommendation](#), due to the increased risk of abdominal injuries. If an infant is choking, take the following action:

1. **Kneel or sit with the infant positioned in your lap.** Lay them face down on your forearm across your lap or thigh. Ensure that the infant's head is facing down, lower than their body, so gravity can help dislodge the object.
2. **Support their head and neck.** Gently place one hand under the infant's chin.
3. **Perform five back slaps** between the infant's shoulder blades using the heel of your hand. If this dislodges the object, you can stop.
4. **Perform chest thrusts.** If the object remains stuck, support the infant's head and sandwich the infant between your forearms. Then flip the infant over so they're face up. Perform five chest thrusts with two fingers in the center of the chest, as if you were doing CPR.
5. **Alternate between five back slaps and five chest thrusts** until the object is dislodged and the infant can breathe or until the infant becomes unresponsive.



## What to Do If an Unconscious Person Is Choking

If a person becomes unconscious due to choking immediate intervention is needed to prevent brain damage or loss of life.

- 1. Safely lower the unconscious person to the ground.**
- 2. Call 911, if this hasn't already been done.**
- 3. Place the unconscious person on their back.**  
Ensure they're on a flat, solid surface.
- 4. Begin CPR.** If the unconscious person isn't breathing, perform CPR until emergency personnel arrive or the person starts to breathe.
- 5. Check the person's mouth.** Between sets of 30 compressions, look for visible obstructions and remove them if possible.
- 6. Give two breaths.** Tilt the person's head, pinch their nose, and give two breaths. If the first breath doesn't go in, reposition their head and attempt the second breath.
- 7. Continue CPR.** Provide 30 compressions, and then check for a visible object before giving two breaths. Repeat this process until advanced help arrives, the scene becomes unsafe, the patient starts to move, or you're too exhausted to continue.



## What to Do If You Are Choking & Alone

In a self-choking situation, performing the Heimlich maneuver can remove the obstruction from your airway. The steps can be modified to ensure you can perform the maneuver effectively on yourself when alone, as self-rescue techniques differ from those used when assisting another person:

- 1. Call 911.** Even if you can't speak, calling 911 and leaving the line open will start an emergency response to your location.
- 2. Find a firm surface, like the back of a chair or a countertop.** Brace yourself against it.
- 3. Position your hands above your belly button with your thumbs against your abdomen.**  
This will create the necessary pressure.
- 4. Press your body inward and downward against the surface.**  
You'll need to generate force to dislodge the object.
- 5. Repeat until the blockage dislodges.**  
If you're having trouble, make visible signs of distress to passersby.

1



2



3



# Special Considerations for Performing the Heimlich Maneuver in the Workplace

Consider the following when performing the Heimlich maneuver in a workplace setting:

1. **Be mindful of the environment.** Ensure that actions don't create hazards or disrupt operations.
2. **Act decisively but respectfully.** Take necessary actions to address the emergency effectively while maintaining respect and professionalism.
3. **Follow workplace protocols.** Adhere to specific procedures for reporting and documenting the incident as outlined by your company's health and safety policies.
4. **Ensure proper training.** Confirm that you and your colleagues have received adequate training in first aid and the Heimlich maneuver to handle emergencies effectively.



---

Handling a choking emergency effectively requires quick thinking and decisive action. By learning the specific steps for assisting all types of choking victims, including self-rescue techniques, you gain essential knowledge that can be used to save a life in an emergency situation.

**Being prepared allows you to act confidently and effectively during an emergency.**  
Visit [www.protrainings.com](https://www.protrainings.com) for CPR and first aid training and certification.