



## Choking and Suffocation Prevention

---

Choking and Suffocation occur frequently and are a major cause of death in adults and children. Choking and suffocation are the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of unintentional death to children under 10.

### Safety Tips for You and Your Family

#### Choking Prevention tips

- Place infants on their backs on a firm, flat crib mattress in a crib that meets national safety standards; look for a Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association certification label. Remove pillows, comforters, toys and other soft products from the crib.
- Always supervise young children while they're eating or playing. Don't allow children under age 6 to eat round or hard foods like peanuts, other nuts, raw carrots, popcorn, seeds or hard candy. They also should not eat hot dogs or grapes unless the skin is removed and the food is chopped into small, non-round pieces. Keep small items such as coins, safety pins, jewelry and buttons out of children's reach. Learn First Aid and CPR.



- Don't allow young children to play with toys or items that are small enough to fit through a cardboard toilet paper roll. Ensure that children play with age-appropriate toys according to safety labels. Inspect old and new toys regularly for damage. Make any necessary repairs or discard damaged toys.
- Remove hood and neck drawstrings from all children's outerwear. To prevent strangulation, never allow children to wear necklaces, purses, scarves or clothing with drawstrings while on playgrounds. Tie up all window blind and drapery cords or cut the ends and retrofit with safety tassels. Never hang anything on or above a crib with string or ribbon longer than seven inches.
- Don't allow children under age 6 to sleep on the top bunk of a bunk bed. Ensure that all spaces between guardrail and bed frame and all spaces in the head and footboards are less than 3.5 inches.

## Choking First Aid

Choking occurs when a foreign object becomes lodged in the throat or windpipe, blocking the flow of air. In adults, a piece of food often is the culprit. Young children often swallow small objects. Because choking cuts off oxygen to the brain, administer first aid as quickly as possible.

The universal sign for choking is hands clutched to the throat. If the person doesn't give the signal, look for these indications:

- ✓ Inability to talk
- ✓ Difficulty breathing or noisy breathing
- ✓ Inability to cough forcefully
- ✓ Skin, lips and nails turning blue or dusky
- ✓ Loss of consciousness

If choking is occurring, begin to perform the **Heimlich maneuver**. If you're the only rescuer, perform the Heimlich maneuver before calling 911 (or your local emergency number) for help.

If another person is available, have that person call for help while you perform the Heimlich maneuver.

### To perform the Heimlich maneuver:

Stand behind the person. Wrap your arms around the waist. Tip the person forward slightly.

Make a fist with one hand. Position it slightly above the person's navel.

Grasp the fist with the other hand. Press hard into the abdomen with a quick,

upward thrust — as if trying to lift the person up.

Repeat until the blockage is dislodged.

## Suffocation Prevention

Most infant suffocations occur when babies are placed face down on a soft surface that they sink into. To be safe always place your young (0-6 months) baby to sleep on his/her back in a crib with a firm mattress.

Avoid sleeping with newborn babies as mothers who accidentally fall asleep on them, can smother the babies.

Despite extensive research the cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is still unknown. However, avoiding soft bedding with blankets and pillows increase the risk of suffocation and should be avoided.

For additional information on Choking and Suffocation visit Washington DSHS on line at [www.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.dshs.wa.gov)

