

Choking

Choking has been defined as "A foreign object that is stuck in the pharynx (back of the throat) or trachea (windpipe) that causes a blockage of or muscular spasm in the airway. If there is mild airway obstruction, the casualty/child should be able to clear it, but if it is complete he or she will be unable to speak, cough or breathe. Unless there is intervention at this point the casualty will become unconscious and could die. The treatment of choking differs depending on the age of the casualty"

When a baby or child chokes it is an emergency medical situation. Call 999 immediately when handling a choking incident - paramedics will determine whether the small foreign object has cleared or not on their arrival The Child Accident Prevention Trust (UK) states that each day around forty under-5s are rushed to hospital after choking on something, or swallowing something dangerous. Food is the most likely cause, but small objects and toys can also be risky for young children.

The Resuscitation Council UK (2012) also describes how the majority of choking events in children occur during play or whilst eating, when a carer is usually present. Events are therefore frequently witnessed, and interventions are usually started when the child is conscious.

Choking is characterised by the sudden onset of respiratory distress associated with coughing or gagging, or stridor (loud, harsh, high pitched respiratory sound). Similar signs and symptoms may also be associated with other causes of airway obstruction, such as laryngitis, or epiglottitis, which require different management.

Suspect choking caused by a foreign body if:

- The onset is very sudden.
- There are no other signs of illness.
- There are clues to alert the rescuer, e.g. history of eating or playing with small items immediately prior to the onset of symptoms. Sometimes choking can be silent with no sound to warn you something is wrong.

Relieving choking

- Safety comes first. Get help. Dial 999.
- Assess the situation if the child is coughing effectively, then no external manoeuvre is necessary.
- Encourage the child to cough, and monitor continuously.

- If the child's coughing is, or becomes, ineffective, shout for help to contact emergency services immediately and determine the child's conscious level.
- Guidance on choking by the Resuscitation Council (UK) and how to relieve it is available at Chapter 9 - Paediatric Basic Life Support - Choking guidance page 100. The new version of the Resuscitation Council Guidance has been accredited by NICE and is available online at: www.resus.org.uk/pages/pbls.pdf

Food Safety

A child dies in the United Kingdom every month from choking, and hundreds more require hospital treatment. It can happen quickly, and it can happen to anyone. Babies and toddlers are most at risk because they examine things around them by putting them in their mouths.

Whole peanuts should be avoided until five years of age as there is a risk of choking (NHS Health Scotland, Fun First Foods (2013) 6. (You can get advice on peanut allergy in Fun First Foods.)

This summary is given on the back page of Fun First Foods: "How to prevent your baby from choking":

- Always stay with your baby/child when they are eating.
- Cook hard or stringy vegetables such as green beans and carrots until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw.
- Encourage your baby/child to chew but avoid giving small items such as peas, whole grapes, or whole cherry tomatoes.
- Stop your baby/child from putting too much food in their mouth in case they choke.
- Make sure their mouth is empty before the next mouthful of food. It is important to go at your baby's/child's pace.
- Let your baby/child feed themselves so they are in control and the food does not go too far back in their mouth.
- Ask your health visitor / public health nurse for advice on how to deal with choking. If your child has special needs and you need advice, ask to speak to a speech and language therapist.

Reduce the risk of your child choking. The following advice is given in Ready Steady Toddler about fruit and vegetables (January 2013) at Good eating habits and by NHS Grampian (Jan 2018).

- Remove any stones or pips before serving.
- Quarter small fruits and vegetables like cherry tomatoes and grapes, half length ways then quarter across the way.

- Cut large fruits into slices rather than chunks. Watch out for small round food items Children can choke on these things - avoid them under age 4 years.

For example- • Peanuts • Whole grapes • Boiled sweets • Hot dogs • Chocolate eggs with small toys inside • Raw carrots • Popcorn • Nuts (whole peanuts should be avoided until the age of 5)

Toy/equipment safety

Keep small objects out of reach. Remember - all small objects could be a potential hazard and block a child's airway. For example:

- Coins, pins, screws, beads.
- Button batteries.
- Balls smaller than $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches (4.45cm.)
- Deflated balloons or pieces of a burst balloon.
- Plastic bags (to prevent inhalation).
- Glitter (to prevent inhalation) - if used by child ensure adult supervision.
- Toys should be age appropriate. Choose toys from a well known manufacturer
- Toys which are a choking hazard because of small parts will be marked with a symbol (face scored through with '0-3' in writing) and make use of the manufacturer's guide, for example "toys not suitable for under 36 months".
- Never let children run with objects in their mouth or while they are eating.
- Take advice when buying toys to make sure they are suitable for the child's age. Don't rely on a CE mark alone as a guarantee of safety. A CE mark on a product is simply a declaration by the manufacturer that the product meets all the requirements of European law and is safe to use. For added reassurance look for third party independent safety certification.
- Check that toys have no broken bits, sharp edges or loose parts.
- To reduce the risk of strangulation posed by looped blind cords they should be kept out of the reach of children. Tie up the cords or use one of the many cleats, cord tidies, clips or ties that are available.
- An annual safety check on all outdoor resources will be carried out to ensure no loose ropes, chains, etc.

Health and Safety at Work under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, workplaces should have first aid provision. The minimum requirement for any workplace is that when people are at work there should be at least one appointed person who will take charge in an emergency situation. It is good practice at Little Treasures Nursery for all staff to receive paediatric first aid training on a regular basis.

In the event that any of the above mentioned scenarios should happen, all staff will follow First Aid training to ensure the wellbeing of the child who is choking.

Procedure for resuscitation

A member of staff will immediately call 999 for an ambulance. A first aid trained staff member will carry out the following resuscitation procedure:

- Tilt the head and lifting the chin to open airway.
- Nip the nose and seal your mouth around the child's mouth.
- Give 5 initial rescue breaths.
- Use 1 or 2 hands as required to depress the chest at least a third of its depth.
- Give 30 chest compressions.
- Continue cycle of 30 compressions to 2 rescue breaths until ambulance arrives and paramedics take over or child regains consciousness and starts breathing for themselves.

If choking incidents happen, the service must keep a record and document the date, time and place of the incident, all the care that was given and what happened to the baby/child immediately afterwards.

If an incident resulted in a hospital admission, or the child was seriously injured, the nursery will notify the Care Inspectorate.

National Care Standards- Health and Wellbeing, Standard 3

Confidence in staff, Standard 12

| Signature | Position | Review Date |
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