

How to stop someone choking

People with some health conditions or on certain medications can choke on food. Here's how to help them.

What does choking look like?

You can tell if a person is choking when they:

- clutch their throat
- cough, wheeze or gag
- find it hard to breathe, speak or swallow
- are making a whistling or squeaking noise
- cannot make any sound at all
- have no air coming out of their nose and mouth
- have blue lips, face, earlobes or fingernails.

When someone is choking

If the person is unconscious:

1. Ask for help from a support person if one is available
2. Ring 000 and call for an ambulance
3. Tell the person on 000 someone is choking, and you need to know how to do CPR. This is where you press on a person's chest repeatedly to help them breathe. The person on 000 will tell you how to do CPR over the phone.

If the person is unconscious and is in a wheelchair:

1. Ask for help from a support person if one is available.
2. Ring 000 and call for an ambulance.
3. Tell the person on 000 someone is choking and you need to know how to do CPR. This is where you press on a person's chest repeatedly to help them breathe. The person on 000 will tell you how to do CPR over the phone once you have put the person who is choking on the floor.
4. Put on the wheelchair brakes.
5. Remove the person's seat belt and straps.
6. Transfer the person from the wheelchair to the floor, and lie them on their back.
7. Follow the advice from the person on 000 about doing CPR.

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If the person is conscious and is coughing:

1. Encourage them to keep coughing to move the obstruction in their windpipe.
2. If they get short of breath or start choking, ring 000 and do what the emergency services person tells you to do.

If the person is conscious but is not coughing:

1. Ask for help from a support person if one is available or call for help immediately.
2. Hit the person's back five times.
3. If this does not work, hit the person's chest five times.
4. If this does not work, repeat steps 2 and 3.
5. If this does not work, ring 000, tell the emergency services person someone is choking and do what they tell you to do.

If the person is conscious, is not coughing and is in a wheelchair:

1. Ask for help from a support person if one is on-site or call a support person immediately.
2. Apply the wheelchair brakes.
3. Remove the person's seat belt or straps.
4. Lean the person forward.
5. Hit the person's back five times.
6. If this does not work, hit the person's chest five times.
7. If this does not work, repeat steps 2 and 3.
8. If this does not work, ring 000, tell the emergency services person someone is choking and do what they tell you to do.

After the choking incident

For up to 10 days after the incident, check that the person is not short of breath, doesn't feel dizzy or confused or doesn't have a cough.

If the person has these, is ill or complains of not feeling well, call emergency services on 000 immediately and ask for an ambulance, as the person may have aspiration pneumonia.

Who can help and support you?

- The support worker can take care of the person if they are with them.
- Emergency services can give you instructions about doing CPR and come and help in an emergency.