

CHOKING

Hazards in the home and how to avoid them



A child dies in the UK 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. Here are some things you can do to help reduce the risk.

1. Keep small objects out of reach:



- Coins, pins, screws, beads
- Button batteries
- Balls smaller than 1¾ inches (4.45 cm)
- Deflated balloons or pieces of a burst balloon

2. Watch out for small, round food items.

Children can choke on these things - avoid them under age 4:



- Peanuts
- Whole grapes
- Boiled sweets
- Hot dogs
- Chocolate eggs with small toys inside



3. Choose toys from a well-known manufacturer.

Toys which are a choking hazard because of small parts will be marked with this symbol:



4. Never let children run with objects in their mouths or while they are eating.

What to do if your child chokes

Most of the time, an object which disappears into a child's mouth will be swallowed and make its way through the body naturally.

Coughing and breathing difficulties are signs that the object may have gone into the windpipe.

This is serious - get medical attention straight away.

If your child is still awake and breathing, don't do anything apart from encouraging his/her own efforts and calling for medical help.

Do NOT slap your child on the back whilst he/she is upright
Do NOT put your fingers into your child's mouth to feel for the object
- you are most likely to push it further down or cause bleeding.

If your child is losing consciousness or is unable to breathe, do not leave him/her but shout for help immediately

1. Give 5 back blows (pictured)

Lie him/her down with the head below the chest and give 5 sharp slaps in the middle of the back.



2. Give 5 chest thrusts (pictured)

Push firmly in the centre of the breastbone. Use 2 fingers for a baby and the palm of your hand for a child.



3. If he/she stops breathing

Make 5 attempts to blow air gently into his/her mouth, making a tight seal with your lips.



4. If the object has not come out, repeat the sequence above

5. Try 5 abdominal thrusts (pictured)

instead of chest thrusts if the child is over 1 year old (do NOT do this in babies). Push firmly inwards and upwards just below the ribs. This can be done lying down (5a) or standing (5b).



To find out more about first aid for choking, contact:

Resuscitation Council (UK): www.resus.org.uk or St John's Ambulance: www.sja.org.uk