# Choking

First aid for adults, children and babies






Cannot cough or speak?

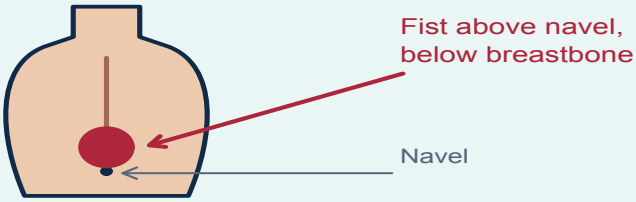
Act now

## Cannot breathe, speak or cough effectively?

Treat this as severe choking. Get someone to call 112, or use speakerphone while helping. Start the appropriate actions straight away.

If the person can cough strongly, encourage coughing and watch closely. Do not give back blows while the cough is effective.

# Adults and children over 1




*Abdominal thrusts: above the navel, below the breastbone.*

## Up to 5 back blows

Support the chest and lean the person forwards. Strike firmly between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand. Check after each blow.

## Then up to 5 abdominal thrusts

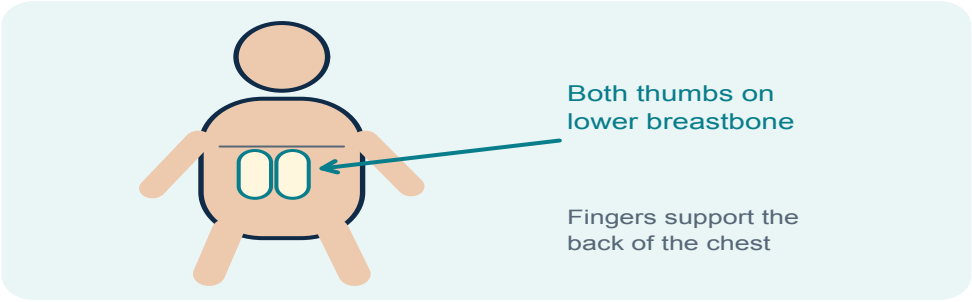
Stand or kneel behind them. Put a clenched fist above the navel and below the breastbone. Grasp it with your other hand and pull sharply inwards and upwards.

Alternate up to 5 back blows and up to 5 thrusts until the object comes out or the person becomes unresponsive.

## Pregnant or unable to reach around?

Use chest thrusts instead of abdominal thrusts. Follow the 112 operator's instructions. Never use abdominal thrusts on a baby.

# Babies under 1 year




*Chest thrusts only for babies. Keep the head supported.*

## Up to 5 back blows

Lay the baby face down along your forearm or thigh. Support the head and jaw, without pressing the throat, and keep the head lower than the chest.

Give up to 5 firm blows between the shoulder blades. Stop if the blockage clears.

## Then up to 5 chest thrusts

Turn the baby face up, supporting the head and keeping it lower than the chest. Encircle the chest with your fingers behind the back.

Put both thumbs on the lower half of the breastbone, just below the nipple line. Give up to 5 sharp chest thrusts. Repeat back blows and chest thrusts if needed.

# If they become unresponsive

## Start resuscitation

Lower them safely. Ensure 112 has been called and follow the operator. Start CPR if they are not breathing normally.

For a child or baby, open the airway and try 5 initial rescue breaths, then CPR. See the Basic life support booklet for the age-specific steps.

## Look, but do not sweep blindly

Remove an object only if it is clearly visible and easy to reach. Never put fingers into the mouth to search for it.

Do not give food or drinks, shake a baby, or hang anyone upside down.

## After the object comes out

Anyone who needed abdominal or chest thrusts should be medically checked. Babies who received chest thrusts need hospital assessment.

Persistent cough, swallowing trouble or noisy breathing needs urgent review even if breathing has improved.

# Prepare before an emergency

## Practise with an instructor

Learn the adult and baby techniques on a hands-on first-aid course. Practise on training equipment, never by giving real thrusts to a well person.

Keep this booklet where carers can find it. Make sure every carer knows the emergency number and the child's age.

## A useful carer handover

Tell emergency staff when choking started, what may have caused it, which actions were used and whether the person lost consciousness.

**First-aid course / date**

**People who care for my child**

**Questions for the clinician**

# Your clinic and care plan

**Healthway Medical Centre**
9 Mdina Road, Ħaż-Żebbuġ
ZBG 9015, Malta
**+356 2033 1155**
Mobile: +356 9952 5356
info@healthwaymalta.com
www.healthwaymalta.com

Mon-Fri 09:00-12:00 & 16:00-20:00
Saturday / public holidays 09:00-14:00
**Sundays closed, including public holidays.**

**For emergencies, call 112. Do not wait for an email or clinic reply.**

**Aftercare / hospital review**

## Guidance and further reading

Resuscitation Council UK: Adult choking algorithm 2025
Resuscitation Council UK: First aid guidelines 2025
European Resuscitation Council: Paediatric life support 2025
St John Ambulance: Baby choking: first aid
UK Defence Medical Command: Choking: special circumstances
Resuscitation Council UK: Paediatric life support 2025

Approved for publication 30 October 2026. Original illustrations; general information, not an individual diagnosis. Follow advice from your treating team.