

Heimlich Maneuver For People with ALS

Choking is caused by a blockage in the throat, which restricts airflow. Most often, choking in adults is the result of getting food stuck in the windpipe. It's not uncommon for people with ALS to have a sudden choking situation. If a person is choking and unable to speak or cough **this is an emergency**.

Without first aid, the lack of airflow brought on by choking can cause serious brain damage or even death by asphyxiation. If you are caring for a person with ALS it's important to know how to help.

The Heimlich maneuver (abdominal thrusts) is an emergency response technique that can save a life in seconds. It is a simple action that will often pushes the food or another object up and out. If not successful in two tries, call 911 and continue trying the Heimlich while waiting for help.

How do I do the Heimlich Maneuver on myself?

If you feel like you have something caught in your throat, try to cough it out. If you can cough forcefully enough to get it out, then you do not need to perform the Heimlich maneuver. If you cannot get the object out by coughing and are struggling for air, you need to act quickly, especially if you are alone.

You need to expel the obstruction before you lose consciousness.

Even through the Heimlich maneuver, continue to intentionally cough.

1. Make a firm fist with your hand. It does not matter which hand you're using.



2. Press your fist against your abdomen (tummy). Place the thumb side of your fist against your abdomen. Your hand should be below the ribcage, but above the navel. Wrap your other hand around your fist.



3. Press against your abdomen. Press your hands in your abdomen. Do so over and over again until the object is dislodged. Use quick, upward thrusts as you attempt to dislodge the object.



4. Add force with a stable object. Find a stable object that is about waist high that you can bend over. A chair, a table, or a counter top will work well for this. With your hands still clasped in front of you, bend over the object. Brace your fists between the chair and your abdomen and drive your body against the solid object.



If you cannot dislodge the object call 911

5. Call your doctor so they can make sure there was no damage.

How do I do the Heimlich Maneuver on someone else?

1. Stand behind the choking victim.
2. Put your arms around his waist and lean him forward.
3. Make a fist with your hand and place it directly above the person's navel (belly button) but below the breastbone.
4. Put your other hand on top of your first, then thrust both hands backwards into their stomach with a hard, upward movement.
5. Do this thrusting action up to five times. Check after each thrust to see if the blockage is gone. **Stop if the victim loses consciousness.**



6. Make sure the object is completely gone. Once the airway is cleared, parts of the object that caused the person to choke can remain behind. If the person is able, ask the victim to spit it out and breathe without difficulty. Look to see if there is something blocking the airway. If there is, you can also do a sweep through the person's mouth with your finger. Only sweep if you see an object, otherwise you could push it further back.
7. After breathing is back Call 911. If the person falls unconscious follow the steps on page 3 under **“What do if a choking person falls unconscious?”**

How to do the Heimlich maneuver on someone lying down?

1. Get the person on their back. If you can't wrap your arms around the person, or if they've fallen, get them on their back. Gently instruct the person to turn on their back and help them as necessary.
2. Kneel at the person's hips. Get on your knees and position yourself on top of the person. Kneel over the person, hovering just above their hips.
3. Position your hands. Place one hand on top of the other. Place the heel of the bottom hand on the person's abdomen. This is the area just below the ribcage but above the navel.
4. Press your hands on the person's abdomen. Using your bodyweight, press your hands into the person's abdomen with a slight upward motion. Repeat doing thrusts until the object is expelled from the person's throat.
5. After breathing is back Call 911. If the person falls unconscious follow the steps below under **"What do if a choking person falls unconscious?"**

What if a choking person falls unconscious?

1. Call 911
2. lower the person on his back onto the floor. Then, clear the airway if possible. If you can see the blockage, take your finger and sweep it out of the throat and out through the mouth. Don't do a finger sweep if you don't see an object. Be careful not to inadvertently push the obstruction deeper into the airway.
3. If the object remains lodged and the person does not regain consciousness or respond, check whether the victim is breathing.
 - a. Place your cheek close to the person's mouth for 10 seconds.



- b. Look to see if the chest is rising and falling, listen for breathing, and feel for the person's breath against your cheek
4. . If the person is not breathing, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
The chest compressions used in CPR may also dislodge the object.
5. While you are waiting for 911 to arrive alternate between chest compressions and checking the airway.



Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Adapted from: Wikihow. <http://www.wikihow.com/Perform-the-Heimlich-Maneuver>
Reviewers: Stephen Goutman, MD, Sandy Wilcock, BSN, RN, Monique Woods, BSN, RN, CRT

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 8/2017