

Airway: Foreign Body Removal

Applies to:	
E	EMT
P	Paramedic

Clinical Indications:

1. Sudden onset of respiratory distress often with coughing, wheezing, gagging, or stridor due to a foreign-body obstruction of the upper airway.

Procedure:

1. Assess the degree of foreign body obstruction.
 - a. Do not interfere with a mild obstruction; allow the patient to clear their airway by coughing.
 - b. In severe foreign-body obstructions, the patient may not be able to make a sound. The patient may clutch his/her neck demonstrating the universal choking sign.
2. **For an infant**, deliver 5 back blows (slaps) followed by 5 chest thrusts (compressions) repeatedly until the object is expelled or the patient becomes unresponsive.
3. **For a child**, perform a subdiaphragmatic abdominal thrust (Heimlich Maneuver) until the object is expelled or the patient becomes unresponsive.
4. **For adults**, a combination of maneuvers may be required.
 - a. First, subdiaphragmatic abdominal thrusts (Heimlich Maneuver) should be used in rapid sequence until the obstruction is relieved or the patient becomes unresponsive.
 - b. If abdominal thrusts are ineffective, chest thrusts should be used. Chest thrusts should be used primarily in morbidly obese patients and in patients who are in the late stages of pregnancy.
5. If the patient becomes unresponsive, begin CPR immediately but look in the mouth before administering any ventilations. If a foreign-body is visible, remove it.
6. **Do not perform blind finger sweeps in the mouth and posterior pharynx. This may push the object farther into the airway.**
7. In unresponsive patients, Paramedics should visualize the posterior pharynx with a laryngoscope to potentially identify and remove the foreign-body using Magill forceps.
8. Document the methods used and result of these procedures in the EHR.

