

Preventing Choking Incidents

This fact sheet presents the definitions of choking and aspiration and includes simple steps that everyone can use to prevent choking incidents for the people served through your organization.

Choking is Preventable!

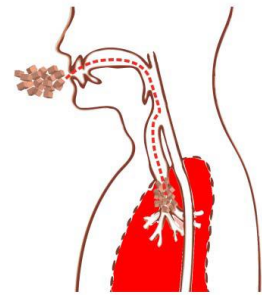
Choking happens when something blocks a person's airway. This can be caused by food, liquids, a bead, a toy, or other small objects.

Aspiration happens when these small objects are breathed into the lungs. This may happen during choking.

Aspiration can be silent—it may not seem that a person is choking.

Aspiration can lead to pneumonia from bacteria or substances that a person breathed into their lungs.

Choking, abdominal thrusts, and pounding someone's back to clear their airway could lead to **internal injuries and damage** to that person's airway.



Some Steps

1. Make sure that direct service professionals (DSPs) and other staff know the signs of choking.
2. Make sure that DSPs and staff know how to use the abdominal thrust technique (Heimlich Maneuver).
3. Make sure that DSPs understand the possibility of aspiration pneumonia or internal injury.
4. Provide your DSPs with the Personal Placemat activity and Care After Choking fact sheet.
5. Ask DSPs to say how they plan to prevent choking—e.g. using Dining Profiles, knowing the lists of foods and drinks that cause choking, and by using the guides for preparing meals.
6. After they have a plan, ask DSPs to say how it will work in different situations.

