# First Aid/ Obstructed Airway

# Conscious Victims

## Abdominal thrusts are used to clear the obstructed airway of a conscious victim. It is an effective life-saving measure in cases of severe airway obstruction.

## A person performing abdominal thrusts uses their hands to exert pressure on the bottom of the diaphragm. This compresses the lungs and exerts pressure on any object lodged in the trachea, hopefully expelling it. This amounts to an artificial cough. (The victim of an obstructed airway, having lost the ability to draw air into the lungs, has lost the ability to cough on their own.)

## Even when performed correctly, abdominal thrusts can injure the person they are performed on. Abdominal thrusts should never be performed on someone who can still cough, breathe, or speak - encourage them to cough instead.

# Signs of a severe airway obstruction

## • The person desperately grabs at their neck

## • The person can not speak or cry out

## • The person's face turns blue from lack of oxygen

# Obstructed Airway for Adults & Children

## Abdominal thrusts are only used on conscious adult or child victims with severe airway obstructions. Before attempting abdominal thrusts, ask the victim "Are you choking?" If the victim can reply verbally, you should not interfere, but encourage the victim to cough.

# If the victim's airway obstruction is severe, then perform abdominal thrusts:

## • The rescuer stands behind and to the side of the victim and wraps their arms around the victim's sides, underneath the victim's arms

## • One hand is made into a fist and placed, thumb side in, flat against the victim's upper abdomen, below the ribs but above the navel

## • The other hand grabs the fist and directs it in a series of upward thrusts until the object obstructing the airway is expelled

## • The thrusts should not compress or restrict the ribcage in any way.

## • If you're not able to compress the victim's diaphragm due to their size or pregnancy, then perform the thrusts at the chest.

# If the victim loses consciousness, call for an ambulance. They fall - you call

# Obstructed Airway for Infants

## For infants, a severe obstruction may be accompanied by a high-pitched, crow-like sound which is not present in adults or children. This is due to the incomplete formation of the infant's airway. Instead of abdominal thrusts, alternate 5 chest thrusts with 5 back blows:

## • Hold the infant with the head in your hand, and the spine along your forearm and the head below the rest of the body

## • Compress the chest 5 times as you would for infant CPR

## • Switch the infant to your other forearm, so their chest is now against the arm • Perform 5 back blows, keeping the infant's head below the rest of the body

## • Continue until the obstruction is cleared, or the infant goes unconscious

# Unconscious Victims

## If a victim has become unconscious as a result of an occluded airway, you should immediately call for assistance from the emergency medical services, and commence a primary assessment, starting with Airway and if required, commence CPR to keep the victim alive.