



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Heimlich maneuver on self

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001983.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001983.htm)

Heimlich maneuver on self

The Heimlich maneuver is a first aid procedure used when a person is choking. If you are alone and you are choking, you can try to dislodge the item in your throat or windpipe by performing the Heimlich maneuver on yourself.

Information

When you are choking, your airway may be blocked so that not enough oxygen reaches the lungs. Without oxygen, brain damage can occur in as little as 4 to 6 minutes. Rapid first aid for choking can save your life.

If you are choking on something, you can perform the Heimlich maneuver on yourself. Follow these steps:

1. Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb of that hand below your rib cage and above your navel.
2. Grasp your fist with your other hand. Press your fist forcibly into the upper abdominal area with a quick upward movement.

You can also lean over a table edge, chair, or railing. Quickly thrust your upper belly area (upper abdomen) against the edge.

If you need to, repeat this motion until the object blocking your airway comes out.

Choking first aid is a related topic.

References

Braithwaite SA, Wessel AL. Dyspnea. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 21.

Driver DE, Reardon RF. Basic airway management and decision making. In: Roberts JR, Custalow CB, Thomsen TW, eds. *Roberts and Hedges' Clinical Procedures in Emergency Medicine and Acute Care*. 7th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2019:chap 3.

Rose E. Pediatric upper airway obstruction and infections. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 162.

Review Date 4/1/2023

Updated by: Jesse Borke, MD, CPE, FAAEM, FACEP, Attending Physician at Kaiser Permanente, Orange County, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by [URAC](#), for Health Content Provider ([www.urac.org](#)). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.

