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# Heimlich maneuver

The Heimlich maneuver is an emergency technique for preventing suffocation when a person's airway (windpipe) becomes blocked by a piece of food or other object.

## Considerations

The Heimlich maneuver can be used safely on both adults and children, but most experts do not recommend it for infants less than 1 year old. You can also perform the maneuver on yourself.

## First Aid

- For a conscious person who is sitting or standing, position yourself behind the person and reach your arms around his or her waist.
- Place your fist, thumb side in, just above the person's navel (belly button) and grab the fist tightly with your other hand.
- Pull your fist abruptly upward and inward to increase airway pressure behind the obstructing object and force it from the windpipe.
- If the person is conscious and lying on his or her back, straddle the person facing the head. Push your grasped fist upward and inward in a maneuver similar to the one above.

You may need to repeat the procedure several times before the object is dislodged. If repeated attempts do not free the airway, an emergency cut in the windpipe ([tracheostomy](#) or cricothyrotomy) may be necessary.

## Alternative Names

Choking - Heimlich maneuver; Abdominal thrusts

## References

Manno M. Pediatric respiratory emergencies. In: Marx JA, Hockberger RS, Walls RM, et al, eds. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*

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