

Choking & poisoning

Keeping children safe

Every week around 500 children under five are rushed to hospital because it's thought they have swallowed something poisonous. Most poisoning accidents involve medicines, household products and cosmetics. The most common form of poisoning is from medication.

- Keep medicines high up and out of reach.
- Keep anything that may be poisonous out of reach - this includes all medicines and pills, alcohol, household cleaners, liquid washing tablets and garden products, preferably in a locked cupboard.
- Use containers that have child-resistant tops - be aware that by the age of three, many children are able to open child-resistant tops.
- Keep all dangerous chemicals in their original containers - for example, do not store weedkiller in an old drinks bottle as a young child may mistake it for something safe to drink.
- Discourage your children from eating any plants or fungi when outside. Avoid buying plants with poisonous leaves or berries.
- Keep alcohol out of the reach of children. Even a small amount can cause alcohol poisoning in children.

Choking

Babies and toddlers can easily swallow, inhale or choke on small items like marbles, beads, lolly sticks, balloons, peanuts, buttons, nappy sacks, plastic toy pieces, strings or cords.

▪ PREVENTION:

- Babies can suffocate or choke on nappy sacks, keep all plastic bags out of reach.
- Check that toys with small pieces are not left out for a toddler to chew and choke on.
- Check that toys are age appropriate, in good condition and include toy safety marks.
- Find out more about resuscitation (CPR) visit www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk

▪ WHAT TO DO:

- Act immediately and calmly.
- If you can see the object, try to remove it. But don't poke blindly with your fingers. You could make things worse by pushing the object in further.
- If your child is coughing loudly, there is no need to do anything. Encourage them to carry on coughing and don't leave them.
- If your child's coughing is not effective (it's silent or they cannot breathe in properly), shout for help immediately and decide whether they are still conscious.
- If your child is still conscious but either they are not coughing or their coughing is not effective, use back blows.
- If they become unconscious, call for help (do not leave your child alone) and start CPR.

Back blows for children under one year

- Support your child in a head-downwards position. Gravity can help dislodge the object.
- Sit or kneel and support the child on your lap. If this is not possible, support your child in a forward leaning position and give the back blows from behind.
- Don't compress the soft tissues under the jaw as this will make the obstruction worse. Give up to five sharp blows to the back with the heel of one hand in the middle of the back between the shoulder blades.

Back blows for children over one year

- Back blows are more effective if the child is positioned head down.
- Put a small child across your lap as you would a baby. If this is not possible, support your child in a forward-leaning position and give the back blows from behind.

- 1** If you think your child has swallowed a harmful medicine or chemical including batteries or a magnet.
- 2** Find the bottle or packet and take it with you when you seek medical help.
- 3** Immediately contact your pharmacist, GP, go to A&E or call NHS 111.