



Featured Health Alert

Choking



Choking is a great concern among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Choking occurs when a foreign object lodges in the throat, or windpipe, blocking the flow of air. In adults, a piece of food often is the culprit. Young children often swallow small objects. Because choking cuts off oxygen to the brain, give first aid as quickly as possible.

The universal sign for choking is hands clutched to the throat. However, if the individual is unable to give the signal, look for these indications:

- Inability to talk or make noise
- Difficulty breathing or noisy breathing
- Squeaky sounds when trying to breathe
- Cough, which may either be weak or forceful
- Skin, lips and nails turning blue or dusky
- Skin that is flushed, then turns pale or bluish in color
- Loss of consciousness

Silent Aspiration

Silent aspiration is common with individuals with developmental disabilities, such as Cerebral Palsy.

Individuals that are at risk of aspiration pneumonia should be monitored for increase coughing, shortness of breath, fatigue, and fever. In silent aspiration coughing may occur 15 to 30 minutes after meal is finished. Individuals cannot always express that they are not feeling well and have difficulty swallowing. It is important for staff to monitor individuals for signs of abnormal behavior and report changes appropriately.



**IF AT ANY TIME AN INDIVIDUAL HAS
DIFFICULTY BREATHING CALL 911
IMMEDIATELY.**

For more health and safety alerts, please visit our website at www.dbhds.virginia.gov

Prevention of Choking

Prevention is key. Monitor individuals during meal times for the following:

- Eating too quickly
- Not chewing food properly
- Coughing during or after meals
- Ensure diet consistencies for example
 - Pureed, Mechanical Soft, Chopped, Ground, Honey thick liquids

High risk foods include, but are not limited to, peanut butter, meats, raw vegetables, grapes, and chewy candy or treats.

Additionally, children are at an increased risk for choking on non-food items such as coins and toys. Be aware of items in an individual's environment, both children and adults, which may pose a choking hazard especially if the individual is prone to ingesting non-nutritive substances. This is also known as Pica.

What to do When Someone Chokes

If an individual is choking, always follow your first aid training. The Red Cross and The American Heart Association offer instructions on choking of a conscious or unconscious person.

Furthermore, follow all medical protocols for individuals including those for individuals with a tracheostomy and/or those who require suction.

Behavioral Changes and Underlying Medical Issues

Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities may not clearly communicate medical concerns like a headache, an earache, or even a urinary tract infection, depending on the extent of the individual's disability. Often, though, caretakers report noting changes to an individual's behavior when such medical occurrences are present.

Behavioral changes, such as strange or unusual behaviors that are not appropriate to the situation, and an underlying medical issue often coincide. It is recommended that individuals be evaluated by a medical professional if a concerning change in behavior is noted.

Behavioral changes that may warrant an evaluation by a medical professional include new or unusual behavior such as:

- self-injurious behaviors
- grimacing or grunting
- sleeping more or sleeping less
- changes in mental status

Tracking an individual's behavior may help to identify a cause for the behavior and may also lead to discovering a previously undiagnosed medical condition. If you have questions or concerns about an individual's behavior, please speak with a medical professional.



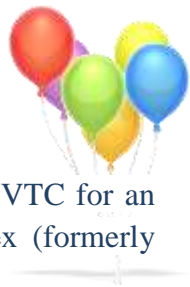
June is Safety Month!

The National Safety Council encourages providers and families to **Take 1 Step** to ensure no one gets hurt. Each week, complete one activity and take a step towards safety.

- Week 1 Emergency Preparedness: Disaster won't wait; create your emergency plan now!
- Week 2 Focus on Wellness: Opioid and other medication safety tips.
- Week 3 Falls: Don't get tripped up!
- Week 4 Driving: Dangers behind the wheel and other vehicle safety tips.

Free educational resources for each week are available at <https://www.nsc.org/pages/nsm-public-materials>

Healthcare Complex Open House



On Wednesday June 13th, join the staff at CVTC for an open house of the new Healthcare Complex (formerly RCSC).

The new complex offers a friendly, welcoming environment with multiple waiting room options to meet the needs of individuals. The goal of the new complex is to reduce anxiety often felt during medical and behavioral appointments.

Additionally, the staff of the DBHDS Office of Integrated Health along with the Mobile Rehab Engineering Team will be on site. Come by and take a tour!



9am-2pm
Central Virginia Training Center
Building 8
521 Colony Rd, Madison Heights, VA
24572