

**Patient
Information**

Injury to the throat

Introduction

This leaflet provides information for a person and their carer, family or friend who has suffered an injury to their throat.

It is possible to have a serious injury without visible signs, meaning a medical assessment should be given.

What can cause a throat injury?

Being hit or held tightly around the front of the neck can be very dangerous. At first you may notice some redness or bruising, feel short of breath or absolutely fine.

Choking and strangling are ways of injuring the neck and throat.

Strangulation can be caused deliberately or accidentally.

Children and people taking part in sports are particularly prone to accidental strangulation.

Most people think it is impossible for their child to strangle themselves but there are lots of children being injured by catching themselves on blind cords or other loops, often when they are climbing. If your child gets tangled in one of these cords it could be fatal.

Choking and strangulation

Choking and strangulation are often thought to be the same but they are not and can cause very different injuries.

Choking is when something gets stuck at the back of your mouth or in your throat. This may make it very difficult to swallow or get air into your lungs.

Strangulation is when something presses or squeezes on your neck.

Manual strangulation may damage the larynx and fracture the hyoid or other bones in the neck. If the throat has been pressed it can interrupt the blood supply going to the brain. This can quickly cause a loss of consciousness (pass out). The blood vessels can be damaged, risking the development of a blood clot.

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When the airway becomes squashed, the person will feel a lack of air going into the lungs leading to the frightening sensation of air hunger.

Signs of injury

When someone has received an injury to their throat, they may at first have only minor symptoms or no symptoms at all. This is because there can be a delay for any swelling or bruising to develop inside the neck area. Ideally you will need to be observed for 6 to

36 hours after the incident and must be accompanied by a responsible adult during this time. Some symptoms are very serious and require emergency help.

Listed below are serious symptoms which need immediate treatment by calling 999 for an ambulance

- Loss of consciousness or confusion
- Loss of memory
- Loss of sensation
- Experience of an abnormal heart beat
- Facial droop
- New weakness or numbness in your arms
- Pain in your neck or throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Hoarse or raspy voice
- Incontinence
- Breathing problems or shortness of breath
- Coughing

Less severe symptoms which need to be discussed with your GP or NHS 111 include:

- Bruises and scratches to lips
- Bruises and scratches around the neck
- Blood shot eye(s) - where there are red patches in the whites of the eyes
- Petechiae (red/brown/purple spotty marks on the skin of face and/or neck)
- Ringing sound in ears

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Caring for an injured throat

When you are in the Emergency Department, it may be necessary for medical photographs to be taken of your neck. This is so we can record and compare any swelling or injury over a period of time. It may also be necessary for the police to collect images for their report.

To ease pain and swelling you may be offered pain relief and given advice regarding further over the counter medication.

If there are visible wounds which require treatment, the Emergency Department/Minor Injuries and Illnesses Unit will provide suitable wound care and discuss on-going care with you. You will also be given written advice.

We recommend the use of ice packs to help reduce any pain and swelling. The ice pack should always be wrapped in a damp cloth before being placed on the skin.

If you are not given a copy of leaflet 'Ice and heat treatment GHPI0659', please visit www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk and enter Ice and heat treatment in the search box.

You will be advised to remain in the company of a responsible adult for up to 36 hours following the incident. This is so that they can call for assistance if you develop any further symptoms or experience any difficulties.

Further information

Child accident prevention Trust

Website: www.capt.org.uk/strangulation

Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)

Improves safety of all victims and their families from abuse.

Tel: 01452 726 570

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

Website: www.gdass.org.uk

Hope House Sexual Assault Referral Centre

Tel: 0300 421 8400

Email: hopehousesarc@glos-care.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Tel: 111

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84:379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>