

**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.

Serious injury may happen without visible signs meaning medical help should always be sought.

What can cause a throat injury?

Being hit or held tightly around the front of the neck can be very dangerous. Initially 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).

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.

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Emergency

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Signs of injury

When someone has received an injury to their throat they may initially have slight symptoms or none 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
- New weakness or numbness in arms
- Pain in neck or throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Hoarse or raspy voice
- A thick feeling in the throat
- 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
- Ringing sound in ears.

Caring for an injured throat

When 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.

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To ease pain and swelling you will be offered pain relief and be recommended further medication for you to take such as anti-inflammatory medication ibuprofen (please follow the guidelines on the leaflet inside the box).

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 also 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 provided with the relevant leaflet please look on the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website, www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk, for leaflet 'Ice and heat treatment GHPI0659'.

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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