



Could You Save a Life?

It's Saturday morning. You've just finished your double stack of pancakes when you notice that your five-year-old son is choking. He is holding his throat and gasping for air. It's happened...the moment you've always feared. Do you know what to do?

On average, 5,000 children, ages 14 and under, are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for airway obstructions. The majority of these children (75 percent) are ages 4 and under.

The Heimlich maneuver is an emergency technique for preventing suffocation when a victim's airway (windpipe) becomes blocked by a piece of food or other object. This maneuver can be used safely on both adults and children, but most experts do not recommend it for infants less than one year of age.

To perform the Heimlich Maneuver the following steps should be taken:

- ◆ Stand behind the person who is choking
- ◆ Place your arms around their waist and get them to bend forward at the waist
- ◆ Clench one hand into a fist and place it just above the person's navel
- ◆ Place the opposite hand on top of the first
- ◆ Thrust both hands at the same time backward into the stomach with a hard, upward movement (in those who are extremely obese or pregnant, the hands should be centered over the person's chest and chest thrusts should be given instead of stomach thrusts)
- ◆ Repeat the thrusting movements every few seconds until the object in the person's windpipe is coughed up and expelled from their mouth (the Heimlich Maneuver should be stopped if the person becomes unconscious and CPR should be administered)

Below are some illustrations to help teach you the basics of the Heimlich Maneuver.



Place the infant stomach-down across your forearm and give five thumps on the infant's back with heel of your hand



Place two fingers in the middle of the infant's breastbone and give five quick downward thrusts



Cover your fist with your other hand and thrust up and in with sufficient force to lift the victim off his feet

