NOVEMBER IS CHOKING PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH!

Choking is when someone cannot breathe because food, a toy/object or other material is stuck inside of the throat. This blocks the airway and stops the person from getting air into their lungs.

Choking is a serious risk in general and especially for our members. For instance, THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL lists choking and suffocation as the third leading cause of death in the home and community settings. Most Division members live and enjoy activities in home and community settings. Conditions such as Cerebral Palsy, Seizures, Autism, Intellectual Disability, and others are common for our members and increase the risk and/or chances of a choking event. With the holiday celebrations during the months of November and December, the risk of a “choking event” is further increased.

The Division has declared November Choking Prevention Awareness Month in an effort to provide information and resources that will help providers avoid and/or address a choking event. This article gives tips for preventing a choking event as well as information needed to address a choking event if/when it occurs. This is general information not to be used in place of CPR/First Aid training and/or as a substitute for medical care.

PREVENT CHOKING:

- Encourage quiet, seated mealtimes
- Discourage eating while walking, running, playing, lying down or standing
- Assign a specific staff person or caregiver to monitor each meal or snack
- Provide plenty of space around members who grab food or objects from others
- Choose holiday decorations carefully: avoid tinsel, small ornaments, and items that look like candy
- Watch for “pocketing” of food (when a person keeps adding food to their mouth without swallowing)
- Do not allow individuals who are at risk for choking or have swallowing issues to eat alone
- Discourage eating while walking, running, playing, lying down or standing
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The following are some foods that are known to cause choking and should be avoided or served with care:

- Hard Candy
- Hot Dogs/Sausages
- Popcorn
- Sticky Foods (marshmallows, fruit roll-ups, peanut butter, gel candy, etc.)
- Chunks of Peanut Butter
- Nuts & Seeds
- Chewing Gum

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHOKING:

- Universal Sign for Choking: one or both hands at the neck area; unable to talk or cough
- Inability to breathe
- Forceful coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing
- Lack of alertness or unconsciousness • Call 9-1-1 immediately!
- Pale or bluish color to lips and/or nails • Call 9-1-1 immediately!

Call or have someone call 9-1-1 immediately before any other call or action when choking is suspected!
HOLIDAY SAFETY
Stay Alert! Be Safe!
Once again the Holiday Season is beginning and finds
us in the midst of the biggest
shopping days of the year!
Many of the individuals we
serve also enjoy opportunities
for holiday shopping. Their
safety, as well as ours, is of primary importance!

The mere thought of “shopping” most likely
approximates excitement for most of us! Please keep
the following brief safety reminders in mind:

PRE-PREPARATION:
Prior to departure, staff should review every detail of the
trip regarding appropriate supervision, meeting places,
security, individuals’ special needs, and emergency
contact information.

TRANSPORTATION:
Ensure that the vehicle is safe and working properly.
Refer to the agency’s maintenance checklist for any
additional functioning requirements and safety equip-
ment. Always walk around the vehicle before departing
from any location to make certain no one has been
overlooked while boarding.

INDIVIDUAL SAFETY:
Review your agency’s safety protocol for events and activities.
During the Holidays, crowded parking lots,
malls, and shopping centers can be distracting and
especially challenging! To ensure everyone’s safety,
keep the following in mind:

- Never leave people unattended.
- Never let individuals wander off without staff
  supervision. Many of the individuals we serve lack
  “stranger-danger” and other safety skills.
- Upon arrival, make certain no one is left in the vehicle.
- Watch for moving traffic.
- Never leave a vehicle running.
- Always lock your vehicle.

Everyone’s safety is of primary importance!
Predators and thieves look for easy targets,
especially during the holidays when you may
become distracted. In the midst of all the holiday
excitement: Stay Alert! Be Safe!

FLU SHOT TIME!
Get Vaccinated!
The flu season peaks from October through March
and may continue as late as May 2015. Flu activity
can circulate year around at lower levels.

Traditional flu vaccines made to protect against
three (3) different flu viruses (called “trivalent”
) vaccines are available. In addition, flu vaccines
made to protect against four (4) different flu viruses
(called “quadrivalent” vaccines) are also available.

Different flu vaccines are approved for use with different groups of people.

Factors that can determine a person’s suitability for vaccination, or vaccina-
tion with a particular vaccine, include a person’s age, health (current and
past) and any relevant allergies, including an egg allergy.

Many people do not realize that there can be complications from the flu.
The elderly, the young, pregnant women, and people with chronic health
conditions are at the highest risk. Complications from the flu include:
thousands of hospital admissions yearly, ear or sinus infections, nausea and
vomiting, dehydration, worsening of chronic health conditions, pneumonia
and death.

Healthy people often do not think they are at risk for the flu and do not get
vaccinated. The CDC recommends that everyone six (6) months and older
be vaccinated yearly for the flu. You should not get the flu shot if you have a
severe allergy to chicken eggs or a history of a severe reaction to a flu
vaccination. You cannot get the flu from a flu shot!

This CDC recommendation has been in place since February 24, 2010,
when the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
 voted for “universal” flu vaccination in the United States to expand protection
against the flu to more people. Contact your medical provider today to
arrange a flu vaccination.

Source: CDC.gov

FREE DENTAL EVENT SCHEDULED
December 12-13, 2014
The Central Arizona Dental Society Foundation
will host a third DENTAL MISSION OF MERCY
(MOM) event at the Arizona State Fairgrounds
in Phoenix on December 12-13, 2014, utilizing
100 portable dental units and 1500 volunteers.
Since 2012, these volunteers have provided
$2.7 million in care to 3,699 Arizona citizens. During the 2014 event more
than $1,000,000 in free care is expected to be delivered to more than 2,000
patients. Both children and adults will be seen.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
http://www.azmom.org

FINGERPRINT CLEARANCE CARD WEBSITE
DPS Website Offers Immediate Card Status Verification
The Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) has a public link allowing
anyone to check on the current status of a Level One Fingerprint Clearance
Application or Card. The site is an excellent employment tool for verifying
the current status of a card for applicants already having a Level One
fingerprint clearance card. Go to http://www.azdps.gov/ or
http://webapps.azdps.gov/public_inq_acct/acct/
ShowClearanceCardStatus.action

The Safety Net is presented by the Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Developmental Disabilities’ Central Office Quality Assurance Unit. Articles are researched and compiled by Quality Assurance staff and Division Managers. Any questions or feedback? Please contact Steven Stencil • SStencil@azdes.gov or 602-771-8113.