



A member of the
National SAFE KIDS Campaign

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*Aspiration/suffocation
is the leading cause of
unintentional injury-
related death among
children less than one
year old.³*

Injury in Colorado, 2005

Airway Obstruction Injuries (AOI) Among Colorado Children Ages 0 to 14

In Colorado, during 2001-2003, airway obstruction injury (AOI) was the leading cause of injury death among children under age one. Airway obstruction includes suffocation (external airway blocked), aspiration/choking (internal airway blocked) and strangulation (item wraps around the neck and interferes with breathing).¹ Children ages 4 and under are at greater risk for AOI due to their small upper airways, natural curiosity which causes them to put things in their mouths, and infants' inability to lift their heads.¹ AOI is the third leading cause of injury death for children ages 0-14.²

Deaths Due to Airway Obstruction Injury

- Annually, approximately 12 Colorado children ages 0-14 die from airway obstruction injuries. This represents 15 percent of all unintentional injury deaths in this age group. Suffocation is the 3rd leading cause of injury death, next to motor vehicle and homicide.²
- Boys accounted for 66 percent of the AOI injury deaths.²
- Sixty percent of the AOI-related deaths were among children under age one and 62 percent of these deaths occurred in a bed/crib.
- The AOI death rate among Black children under age one is significantly higher than all other race/ethnic groups combined (from 1994 through 2003).²
- For children under age 1, most deaths were due to suffocation; while among children ages 1-14, more deaths were due to choking.²
- Sixty-nine percent of AOI-related deaths occurred at home.²

Hospitalizations for Airway Obstruction Injury

- From 2001 through 2003, there were 13 AOI-related hospitalizations among children ages 14 and under.²
- Boys accounted for 62 percent of the hospitalizations; however, all of the AOI-related hospitalizations under age 1 were girls.²



Airway Obstruction Injury (suffocation, aspiration/choking, strangulation) Can Be Prevented

Suffocation

- Always place a baby to sleep on his/her back (even at naptime) on a firm, flat, snug-fitting mattress, such as in a crib that meets national safety standards (space between slats should be no more than 2-3/8 inches in width).^{4,5} Keep blankets and other coverings away from a baby's nose and mouth.⁴
- Remove soft, fluffy bedding and stuffed toys from a baby's sleeping area.⁴
- Never place a baby on an adult bed, waterbed or bunk bed. Infants up to 18 months can suffocate in their sleep when their bodies or faces become wedged between the mattress and bed frame or the mattress and wall.⁵
- Co-sleeping can result in the adult rolling on top of or next to the baby... smothering him or her. Place babies to sleep in a crib that meets current safety standards and remove all soft bedding and pillow-like items.⁶

Choking

- Check all rattles, squeeze toys and teething rings for small ends/parts that could protrude or break off into a baby's mouth.⁵
- Ensure children play with age appropriate toys (read toy labels). Never allow a child to play with latex/rubber balloons, consider using Mylar balloons as an alternative.
- Many choking incidents are food-related. Hard candy, grapes, nuts, popcorn, carrots and hot dogs are a few examples that pose a choking hazard. Cut food into small pieces before giving it to small children. Items such as safety pins, buttons, coins and jewelry can pose a choking hazard and should be kept out of a child's reach.
- Test small objects/parts to see if they pose a choking hazard to a child by dropping the objects into a toilet paper tube. If they fit in the tube, they could be dangerous in the hands of a child.

Strangulation

- Teething rings and pacifiers should never be fastened around a baby's neck and never use string or cord to hang any object, such as a mobile or toy, on or near a crib.⁵
- Never put a crib, child's bed or furniture near window blinds or draperies. Children can strangle on window cords. Consumers can call 800-506-4636 or visit www.windowcoverings.org/20.html to get free repair kits.⁵
- Remove drawstrings from the hood and the neck area of outerwear including jackets and sweatshirts. Purchase outerwear with alternative closures such as snaps, buttons or Velcro.⁵ Never allow children to wear necklaces, purses, scarves or clothing with drawstrings while on a playground.¹ Children should remove their bike helmet before playing on playground equipment.

General Safety Tip

- Encourage all parents and caregivers to take certified CPR and First Aid classes.

References

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"SAFE KIDS are no accident!"