

Information on Strangulation

Strangulation and choking are not the same thing.

Definition of Choking: internal blocking of the breathing airway by an object. (Example: A piece of food is stuck in your throat)

Definition of Strangulation: blocking the breathing airway from an outside force with applied pressure.

The act of strangulation symbolizes an abuser's power and control over the victim. Strangulation is a way for offender's to make you fearful. The neck is considered by doctors to be one of the most delicate and important part of the body. Blood and oxygen all flow from the body to your brain through the neck.

Strangulation often leaves no marks. **Fifty percent of victims that experience strangulation have no visible injuries.**

Unconsciousness from strangulation can happen within 5-10 seconds.

Symptoms may come later and not right after the incident. These include: Physical, neurological, psychosocial injuries as well as death.

Physical:

Scalp: petechiae, bald spots, bump to the head. **Eyes:** petechiae to the eyeball, petechiae to the eyelid, bloody red eyeballs, vision changes, and droopy eyelid. **Face:** petechiae (tiny red spots slightly red or rosy colored). **Chest:** Chest pain, redness, scratch marks, bruising abrasions. **Voice and Throat:** Raspy or hoarse voice, unable to speak, trouble swallowing, painful to swallow, clearing the throat, coughing, nausea, drooling, sore throat, harsh vibrating noise when breathing. **Ears:** ear ringing, petechiae on earlobe(s), bruising behind the ear, bleeding in the ear. **Mouth:** bruising, swollen tongue, swollen lips, cuts/abrasions, internal petechiae. **Neck:** redness, scratch marks, finger nail impressions, bruising (thumb or fingers), swelling, ligature marks. **Breathing:** difficulty breathing, respiratory distress, unable to breathe.

Neurological: loss of memory, loss of consciousness, behavioral changes, loss of sensation, extremity weakness, difficulty speaking, fainting, urination, defecation, vomiting, dizziness, headaches.

Psychosocial: PTSD, Depression, Suicidal Ideation, memory problems, nightmares, anxiety, severe stress reaction, amnesia, psychosis.

Delayed Fatality: Death can occur days or weeks after the attack due to carotid artery separation and respiratory complications such as pneumonia, Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome and the risk of blood clots traveling to the brain leading to a stroke.

After you have been strangled:

- Stay with someone you trust for the first twenty four hours and have them monitor your signs and symptoms
- Seek medical attention or call 9-1-1 if you have any of the following symptoms: difficulty breathing, trouble swallowing, swelling to your neck, pain to your throat, hoarseness or voice changes blurred vision, continuous or severe headaches, seizures, vomiting or persistent cough.

If you have been strangled in the past: If you have been strangled and are having any signs of strangulation, please go to your closest medical clinic/ provider or emergency room.

Resources: The Family Justice Center (716-558-7233) has a forensic nurse examiner who works from 8:30-5pm M-F to assess and work with those who have experienced strangulation. **More information on strangulation can be found on the website** <https://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com/>

