

The Fatal Five in ID/A

There are five major health issues identified in people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) that lead to serious illness, infections and sometimes death. They are called the **Fatal Five: choking/aspiration, constipation, dehydration, seizures, and infection.**



Choking



Constipation



Dehydration



Seizure



Infection

One single choking event may be a warning sign for future choking events. Choking is life threatening when food blocks the airway and the person is unable to breathe.

What to do for Choking

- If the person is alert, but unable to cough, breathe, or speak, begin first aid and instruct someone to call 911.
- If the person is unconscious, call 911 immediately and begin first aid/CPR. Do not seek supervisor approval before calling 911.

Active Supervision

Never leave a person who is identified as at risk for choking unattended during meals. Observe the person's face for signs of difficulty while swallowing. Never leave the person unattended with foods of different consistency.

Causes of Choking

- Eating too quickly
- Placing large amounts of food in mouth
- Choosing not to wear dentures
- Poor posture while eating

- Dry mouth
- Eating food with consistency difficult to swallow
- Decayed, missing teeth
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing
- Aging
- Certain medications

Signs of Choking

- Severe coughing, gagging
- Hitting chest
- Putting hands on throat
- Inability to talk
- Inability to breathe
- Anxiety; agitation
- Red face
- Noisy breathing
- Skin color - gray or blue
- Loss of consciousness

Be Proactive to Prevent Choking

- Identify people at risk and discuss with physician.
- Prepare foods and drinks to proper consistency.
- Use adaptive equipment—utensils, cups, plates.
- Encourage use of properly fitted dental appliances.
- Encourage small bites of food.
- Provide reminders to eat at slower pace.
- Encourage sips of fluid between bites of food.
- Provide reminders to swallow before speaking.

Safe Feeding Techniques

- Sit down facing the person.
- Offer small bites of food.
- Offer sips of fluids between bites.
- Converse only after the person swallows.