

# Strangulation Fact Sheet

Utah 2016



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH**

## Terminology is important.

“Choking” is the obstruction of a person’s airway caused by an internal object within the body, such as accidentally swallowing a piece of food.

“Strangulation” or suffocation is a form of asphyxia characterized by closure of the blood vessels and air passages of the neck as a result of external pressure on the neck.

## Strangulation can cause substantial injuries:

- Only 8 to 11 pounds of pressure on the throat area for approximately 10 seconds causes loss of consciousness
- Within 30 seconds, temporary or permanent brain damage may occur.
- Low oxygen to the brain can cause a permanent vegetative state.
- Continuous obstruction of the carotid arteries, the jugular veins, or the airway will produce death by complete loss of oxygen (Asphyxia)<sup>1</sup>.
- One study showed that in 50% of strangulation cases there were no visible markings to the neck and in 35% of cases there were only minor injuries visible<sup>2</sup>.
- 38 states have passed strangulation statutes to increase awareness, and enhance victim safety and offender accountability<sup>3</sup>.

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*“strangulation and suffocation, or an attempt of either, is specific serious conduct that deserves enhanced punishment regardless of injury.” - U.S. Department of Justice*

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## Strangulation and Homicide

- Strangulation accounts for 10% of all violent deaths annually in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>
- 43% of domestic homicide victims had been strangled by their perpetrator within the 12 months prior to his/her death<sup>5</sup>.

## In Utah:

- 40% of homicides in Utah are domestic violence related
- According to the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, each homicide costs Utahns over \$100,000. These are costs associated with arrest, prosecution, courts cost, and incarceration cost for **one year** in the Utah State Prison.

## SIGNS OF STRANGULATION

SIGNS of strangulation can include:

small red spots on the face or neck area or in the eye,  
swelling in throat or neck area, blood shot eyes,

bruising on the throat or any surrounding area, i.e. behind ears, hairline or face,

abrasions, marks around the neck caused by an object, i.e. necklace, shirt.

SYMPTOMS of strangulation can include:

voice changes, hoarseness, raspy voice, painful swallowing,

changes or difficulty breathing to the inability to breathe,

loss of consciousness or a period of time you can not remember,

loss of memory or behavior changes,

involuntary urination or defecation during or after the incident.

<sup>1</sup> Gael Strack JD, Dr. George McClane & Dean Hawley, 2001, Family Justice Center Alliance, San Diego

<sup>2</sup> Journal of Emergency Medicine.” A review of 300 attempted strangulation cases.” Strack, GB, etal. Oct 2001

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Funk & Schuppel, 2003; McClane, Strack & Hawley, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, et al, CDC, 2002