



Institute For
Addressing
Strangulation

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Information after a medical assessment for strangulation

For patients under 16 years of age



Warning: you might find the information in this leaflet upsetting.



Help is available

You've done the right thing to get medical help. You're on the road to recovery. Continue to reach out to those supporting you.

There are also tools and services that can help you. Some are included on the 'Where else can I get help' page at the end of the leaflet.

You've been given this leaflet to:

- help make sense of what's happened and next steps
- help you think about the support and self care needed for your recovery
- have something to refer back to when needed

You might want someone who supports you to read this leaflet with you.

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🕒 What is strangulation?

Strangulation is when there is pressure on the neck. The airways get squashed, and less blood gets to the brain. Blood carries the oxygen our brain needs, so when it can't get through, the brain doesn't get the oxygen it needs. You might have heard different words for it, like 'choking'.

It can happen for different reasons. Some people do it to hurt someone else. Some do it to hurt themselves. Some people do it for excitement. It can happen as a game or challenge.

Strangulation is not safe – it can harm our bodies and minds. When the blood stops flowing to the brain, there is a risk of medical problems like stroke and death.



Safety



There is no safe way to strangle

Strangulation can cause serious harm and death

Are you in danger?

If you're in contact with the person who strangled you or you want to harm yourself, get help:

- speak to a trusted adult, e.g. safe family member, teacher, school nurse, counsellor or doctor
- call 999 if you are in danger

999 Call now if you are in danger

♥ How do you feel?

People have different reactions to being strangled. There's no "right" or "normal" reaction. How you feel could be affected by why it happened.

The reaction you had might not be what you expected, or you might not have known what to expect. You might be unsure how you feel, not feel much, or have mixed feelings.



🧑 What can happen to your body?

After being strangled you might experience:

pain in your neck

it's hard or painful to
swallow

it's hard or painful to
breathe

headaches

feeling sick, being sick

voice changes or difficult
to speak

bruises or scratches on
your neck

tiny spots on your neck,
head or eyes
(petechiae)

no physical symptoms
or signs



What happens now?

If you're feeling anything painful, difficult or strange, don't worry. Asking for help and getting a medical assessment was the right thing to do.

Your doctor will let you know the results of the medical assessment and what the next steps are. If you need treatment or further investigations, they will discuss the options with you and try to reassure you about any concerns you have.

Do ask questions if there's anything you're unsure of, or feel worried about. There are no silly questions! A trusted adult can help you think about any questions you want to ask.

Update your doctor about any new symptoms you notice. Sections below will help you think about support and self care.



Who can I talk to?

Think about who you have around you for support; don't hesitate to reach out to them. It can be hard to ask for help. We all deserve support when things are tough.



Trusted adults

A safe family member, teacher, school nurse, counsellor or doctor



Peers

A friend or loved one who supports you



Services

Your doctor, Childline, and Children and Adolescents' Mental Health Services



Self care

Grounding techniques and self care that help you feel calmer



☆ Taking care of yourself

Below are suggestions for self care which you can do on your own or with the support of a friend or loved one. Different things work for different people. Think about what might help you, try things out and add in anything you want to.



Get your thoughts and feelings out

in whatever way works – write, draw, make something or move around, to express and explore them.



Wind down in the evenings

Give yourself time and a routine, e.g. a bath, calming music, screens off an hour before bed.



Make something visual

A collage, mood board or drawing that can lift your mood. Keep it with you or on your wall.



Make a resilience box

Find objects for each of the 5 senses which help to comfort or soothe you.



Spend time in nature

Go for a walk, sit in a garden, listen to birdsong. Time in nature can be peaceful and healing.



Take the pressure off

Listen to your body. Sometimes healing can be doing nothing, giving yourself time to just be.

🕒 Grounding techniques

Grounding is a way to bring yourself back to the here and now, to remind yourself you are safe now. It helps to distract from upsetting feelings or memories.



Mental grounding

- Describe your surroundings in detail
- Go through the alphabet thinking of a different name for each letter
- Imagine yourself walking away from distress to a safe, calm place
- Repeat empowering messages e.g. "I'm strong and healing"



Physical grounding

- Put your hands in cold/warm water
- Focus on your breath – count 4 seconds for every breath in and out
- Feel your feet connecting with the floor
- Open and close your hands into fists



Soothing grounding

- Say soothing messages e.g. "I'm safe and supported"
- Imagine or look at photos of people who make you feel safe
- Create a safe, soothing space e.g. a cocoon of blankets
- Plan something to look forward to e.g. day out with a friend

♥ Where else can I get help?

999 Worried about your safety? Need urgent medical help? Call 999

Childline: 0800 1111 – free counselling for anyone under 19 in the UK, with any issue. Childline can help with any of the issues below and anything else on your mind.

If a partner or family member has harmed you: call 999 for urgent help, or Childline: 0800 1111. If you can't talk safely or privately at home: [Safe spaces](#).

Sexual violence

- Your local Sexual Assault Referral Centre can help you tell the police, and put you in touch with emotional support: [nhs.uk service search](#)
- Wales: [Access a SARC – NHS Wales Performance and Improvement](#)
- Scotland: [Turn to SARCS | NHS inform](#)
- N. Ireland: [Sexual Assault Referral Centre | The Rowan](#)
- [Rape Crisis England & Wales – support for children and young people](#)
- Stop It Now – support and advice about child sexual abuse: 0808 1000 900

Relationships

- [LoveRespect](#) – relationship advice for young people
- [The Mix](#) – support for under 25s
- [Shore](#) – a safe space for teenagers worried about sexual behaviour

Mental health

- [Young Minds](#)
- Shout – text 85258, [giveusashout.org](#)
- Your doctor can connect you with Children and Adolescents' Mental Health Services
- Papyrus Hopeline: 0300 102 2470, [papyrus-uk.org](#)



Thank you to the incredible survivors and Safe Lives Changemakers who have helped develop this leaflet.



Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine
of the Royal College of Physicians

Read the Victim Information Leaflet →

Also available translated in seven languages



**Institute For
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This leaflet has been developed by the Institute for Addressing Strangulation (IFAS), informed and shaped by the experiences and insights of survivors, with support from the SafeLives Changemakers, to support healthcare professionals in providing evidence-informed information to children, young people and their families following a medical assessment for strangulation.

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This resource should be used alongside clinical assessment, local safeguarding procedures and professional judgement. It is not intended to replace individual clinical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Read more on [how survivors shape research at IFAS](#).