

Non-lethal strangulation

Non-lethal strangulation: A silent threat

→ WHAT IS NON-LETHAL STRANGULATION?

Non-lethal strangulation (also known as choking) happens when someone puts pressure on the neck, blocking blood flow or oxygen.

Even for a few seconds, it's a serious form of harm with deadly effects. It's often a tactic of control in domestic and family violence, and sexual violence situations that is often unreported.

Strangulation is one of the most dangerous and most misunderstood domestic violence behaviours. The risk of homicide for victims who have been strangled is 800 times higher than for those who haven't. It is very serious and immediate medical attention is necessary. Every minute counts!

→ WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

A critical timeline.

Survivors can suffer brain damage, memory loss, and psychological trauma within seconds - without visible injuries and from pressure lighter than a firm handshake.

- ➡ **15+ seconds** loss of bladder control
- ➡ **20+ seconds** decerebrate rigidity (stiff, straight arms)
- ➡ **30+ seconds** loss of bowel control
- ➡ **40+ seconds** decorticate rigidity (stiff, bent arms)
- ➡ **1–2.5 minutes** risk of brain death

Reaching out for help is hard, but it's the first step to safety



Strangulation can be fatal in under 2.5 minutes



Alarming, 70–80% of people who experience non-lethal strangulation don't have visible injuries.

A medical examination is required to assess the extent of the injuries.

→ SEXUAL STRANGULATION

Sexual strangulation, also referred to as choking, erotic asphyxiation, or breath play, involves applying pressure to the neck, restricting airflow and blood flow to the brain.

It's extremely dangerous and there is no risk-free way to engage in this activity.

Strangulation and sexual violence often co-occur, making the person experiencing violence less likely to report it. It's a serious form of violence and a criminal offence. The entertainment industry often sensationalises sexual choking in movies and tv shows - misrepresenting and obscuring the life-threatening risks.

→ NON-LETHAL STRANGULATION IN CHILDREN

Non-lethal strangulation in children carries a much higher risk of brain swelling than adults.

Applying pressure to the neck can block oxygen flow to the brain, causing unconsciousness within seconds and death within minutes. Injuries sustained from non-lethal strangulation may not be visible on the body however internal trauma to the body can have long-lasting physical and mental effects resulting in death, even months after the event.

Children may have trouble breathing, speaking, or swallowing, and may experience nausea, vomiting, light-headedness, headache, head-holding, or accidental urination and bowel movements.

If you need immediate assistance, please phone 000 for emergency services.

Steps you can take

Non-lethal strangulation regardless of whether it's consensual or not is dangerous and can be fatal. If you have experienced non-lethal strangulation, some steps you can take include:

- ➡ **Seeking medical treatment right away.**
- ➡ **Using ice packs for swelling: 20 minutes, several times daily for 3 days.**
- ➡ **Asking a safe adult to stay with you for 24–72 hours.**
- ➡ **Deciding if you are safe to remain where you are.**



Contact us

Safe and Well CQ offer free domestic and family violence, sexual assault and general wellbeing counselling and support for women and families.

Phone	4979 1456 / 1800 749 222
Email	info@safeandwellcq.org.au
In person	65 Central Lane, Gladstone, QLD 4680
Emergency service	Triple Zero (000)
DVconnect	1800 811 811