

STRANGULATION

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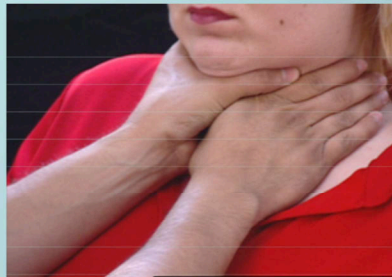
Strangulation ? or Choking?



Strangulation or Choking

- When documenting injuries, refer to the definitions below to determine if it's "choking" or "strangulation."
- CHOKING = internal obstruction of the airway.
- STRANGULATION = form of asphyxia characterized by closure of the blood vessels and air passages of the neck as a result of external pressures on the neck.

Types of Strangulation



Types of Strangulation

1. Hanging – almost always suicide.
2. Ligature Strangulation – if death results, these are almost always homicides.
 - Garroting by telephone cord, rope, wire, clothing or other means
3. Manual Strangulation
 - Hands or forearms
 - Standing or kneeling on the neck

The Lethality of Strangulation

“The use of an object in strangulation increases the likelihood of lethality. Similarly, if the victim blacks out, she/he is in great danger of not regaining consciousness or sustaining brain damage from lack of oxygen.”

— George McClain, MD, San Diego Emergency Department



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Strangulation is part of most dangerousness & lethality checklists.

Intent of Strangulation



Intent of Strangulation – Ask Trainees for their ideas.....

What is the intention of the batterer? Why does he strangle his victim?

Power & Control?

He determines whether the victim lives or dies?

Ultimate control – he can restore “life” (ability to breathe) to his victim = very dangerous for victim



What Signs and Symptoms Indicate Strangulation?

Ask trainees for suggestions.....then discuss with list on next slide.

Signs and Symptoms

- **THROAT**
- **NECK**
- **EYES**
- **FACE**
- **VOICE**
- **BREATHING**
- **OTHER SIGNS**

Be sure to check for these signs with the victim & take photographs of injuries:

THROAT/NECK

- Redness
- Bruises
- Rope or cord burns
- Neck swelling
- Neck pain; spots from ruptured capillaries
- Tiny red spots, red linear marks, bruising, impression marks, scratch marks, claw marks

EYES/FACE

- Red eye (petechiae)
- Chin abrasions

VOICE/BREATHING

- Loss of voice
- Raspy breathing or hoarseness
- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing

OTHER SIGNS

- Light headed or head rush
- Fainting/unconsciousness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Involuntary urination or defecation
- Pulmonary damage/coughing up blood
- Miscarriage hours or days later



Pronounced petechiae in the whites of the eyes and on the cheeks/face.



Petechiae located inside the eyelid.

Questions to Ask the Victim (1)

- Was victim strangled?
- One or both hands? With object?
- Duration?
- Shaken while strangled?

Questions to Ask (1)

Ask *every* abuse victim, “Did the suspect strangle you?” She may not realize what strangling is. If she says “no,” then ask, “Did he put his hands or an object around your neck and squeeze?”

Did the suspect use his hands? One or two?

Did the suspect use an object? Plastic bag? Clothing? Other object?

How long did the suspect strangle you?

Were you shaken while being strangled?

How much shaking? Little shaking? Whipping back and forth?

Questions to Ask the Victim (2)

- Was force used? How much?
- Difficulty breathing?
- Urination or defecation?
- Corroborating witnesses?



Questions to Ask (2)

How much force was used? How hard did the suspect grab the victim's throat?

Did the victim have difficulty breathing?

Did the victim report urinating or defecating?

Were there any corroborating witnesses to the incident?

Questions to Ask the Victim (3)

- Neck pain, drooling?
- Prior incidents? How many? How often?
- Injuries?
- Pre-existing neck injuries?
- Pregnant or might be?



Questions to Ask

- Any complaint of pain, discomfort, trouble swallowing, drooling or raspy voice?
- Any prior incidents of strangulation? How many? How often?
- Any pre-existing neck injuries?
- Ask are you pregnant or think you may be?

Suspect Documentation & Evidence

- Rings on fingers?
- What was said while strangling?
- Suspect's demeanor/facial expression.
- Suspect's injuries



Very Important to Document thoroughly so that the Judge can review in case of a Bail Bond Hearing.

Was the suspect wearing any rings?

What did the suspect say while he was strangling the victim?

Describe the suspect's demeanor and facial expression.

Document suspect's injuries (scratches to forearms, chest, face)

Results of Strangulation



There are many serious results of strangulation.

This is a dangerous situation for the victim and should be thoroughly investigated so that victim may receive appropriate medical assistance. Always call EMS!

Obstruction of the Carotid Artery

- Most common cause of strangulation.
- Unconsciousness occurs.
- Applying 8 pounds of pressure effectively cuts off oxygen flow to the brain (less than pressure required to engage the trigger of a handgun).
- Oxygen flow need only be cut off for 8 seconds to cause critical injury.
- *Carotid Artery Obstruction: 11 lbs of pressure for 10 seconds causes unconsciousness*

Obstruction of the Carotid Artery

- Most common cause of strangulation.
- Unconsciousness occurs.
- Applying 8 pounds of pressure effectively cuts off oxygen flow to the brain (this is less than the amount of pressure required to engage the trigger of an ordinary handgun).
- Oxygen flow need only be cut off for 8 seconds to cause critical injury.
- *Carotid Artery Obstruction: 11 lbs of pressure for 10 seconds causes unconsciousness, but consciousness is regained in 10 seconds if pressure released*

Obstruction of the Jugular Vein

- Secondary cause of strangulation.
- Applying 4.4 pounds of pressure completely obstructs the vein.

Obstruction of the Jugular Vein

Secondary cause of strangulation.

Applying 4.4 pounds of pressure completely obstructs the vein.

Lung Damage

- Damage may result from vomit being inhaled during strangulation. This may lead to aspiration pneumonitis – condition where the gastric acids begin to digest the lung tissue.
- Mild cases of pneumonia may occur as much as a few days later.
- Lungs may fill with fluid due to complex pathological processes that may arise from direct pressure placed on the neck.

Lung Damage

- Damage may result from vomit being inhaled during strangulation. This may lead to aspiration pneumonitis – a very serious condition where the gastric acids begin to digest the lung tissue.
- Mild cases of pneumonia may occur as much as a few days later.
- Lungs may fill with fluid due to complex pathological processes that may arise from direct pressure placed on the neck.

Obstruction of the Trachea

- Applying 33 pounds of pressure completely obstructs the trachea.
- Can cause fracture of the trachea and death.
- Brain death occurs if strangulation persists for 4 to 5 minutes.



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No Visible Injuries

- **Sometimes there are No Visible Injuries!**
- Officers should always call EMS-internal injuries, may not be apparent to the victim.
- Because of underlying brain damage by lack of oxygen victims have died up to several weeks later.
- *Injuries from strangulation, like many injuries from domestic abuse, are “undetectable.”*
- *Remember - Strangulation is not the same thing as choking.*

Sometimes there are No Visible Injuries!

- Officers should always call EMS because internal injuries, which can be fatal, may not be apparent to the victim.
- Because of underlying brain damage by lack of oxygen during strangling, victims have died up to several weeks later.
- *Injuries from strangulation, like many injuries from domestic abuse, are “undetectable.”*
- *Remember - Strangulation is not the same thing as choking.*

Training Exercise 1

Handling the Call: Domestic Violence Vignettes Scene 18 “I Don’t Want Him Here Tonight”

Training Exercise – Police Response

Play Scene 18 “I Don’t Want Him Here Tonight” from Handling the Call: Domestic Violence Vignettes DVD

(9 minutes 45 seconds)

(Disclaimer – Video was produced in 2000: the term “choking” is used when referring to “strangulation.” Now there is a distinction between the two terms.)

-What did officers do correctly when responding to this domestic call?

-Suspect

-Victim

-Scene/Weapons

-Past History/Context

-Medical Assistance

- What else should they have done or not done?

Training Exercise 2

Handling the Call: Domestic Violence Vignettes Scene 15 “My Crazy Wife Stabbed Me!”

Training Exercise – Preparing a Strangulation Case for Trial

Play Scene 15 “My Crazy Wife Stabbed Me!” from Handling the Call: Domestic Violence Vignettes DVD

(7 minutes 40 seconds)

-Recent changes to the Illinois Criminal Code have refined the scope and meaning of strangulation and the evidence needed to establish a criminal offense. For the purposes of this exercise, assume that Mrs. Lee had wet hair (having showered before police respond to the scene) and a hoarse voice when police arrived in the *My Crazy Wife Stabbed Me* scenario.

-Referring to pages 66 through 68 in the State’s Attorney Protocol, pages 70 and 71 in the Law Enforcement Protocol, and the facts from *My Crazy Wife Stabbed Me*, develop an outline of what initial interviews with the victim and the offender should cover.

-Determine what evidence can be collected at the scene in the initial response.

-Determine what evidence may be available in a follow-up report to support an arrest and prosecution for strangulation. Include possible sources of information in your outline, and outline the elements of a successful prosecution of a case of strangulation identifying potential witnesses including those who may enhance the prosecution.

Acknowledgements

Resources provided by:

- Lydia Walker, Domestic Violence Trainer/Consultant, “Recognizing Injury, Physical and Sexual Child Abuse”, 1983, 1-479-750-7322
- Mark Wynn, Wynn Consulting – www.markwynn.com
- 4th Judicial Circuit FVCC Law Enforcement Committee
- OVW Rural Grant Committee, 4th Judicial Circuit

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