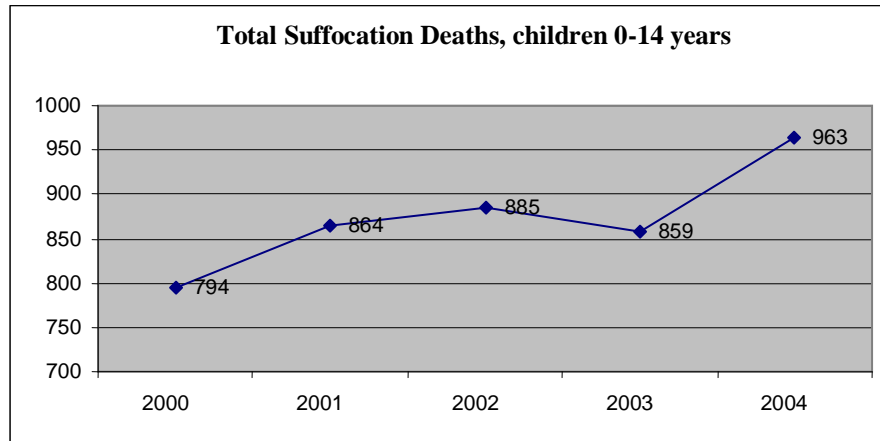


Suffocation and Choking Safety

Key Facts

- Each year, approximately 873 children ages 14 and under die from airway obstruction injuries.¹



- Children sustain approximately 18,000 suffocation injuries each year.²
- More than 19,000 children were treated in hospital emergency rooms for choking-related episodes in 2005.³
- In 2004, 963 children ages 14 and under died from an unintentional strangulation injury; 88 percent of these deaths occurred to children under 4 years of age.⁴
- Choking accounts for 44 percent of all toy-related fatalities.⁵
- Each year, cribs and playpens are responsible for half of all nursery product-related deaths among children ages 5 and under.⁶
- Cribs, often older or used cribs, are responsible for 26 strangulation and suffocation deaths each year.⁷

Where and How

- The majority of childhood suffocation, choking and strangulation incidents occur in the home.^{8 9}
- 60 percent of infants suffocate in the sleeping environment as a result of pillows/cushions blocking their airway while sleeping.¹⁰
- The majority of childhood choking injuries are associated with food items, including hot dogs, candies, nuts, grapes, carrots and popcorn.^{11 12}
- Non-food choking hazards tend to be round in nature, such as coins, small balls, and/or objects that conform, like balloons.¹³
- Common items that strangle children include clothing drawstrings, ribbons, necklaces, pacifier strings, and window blind and drapery cords.^{14 15}

- Openings that permit the passage of a child's body but are too small for his or her head, can lead to entrapment and strangulation. Hazards include bunk beds, cribs, playground equipment, baby strollers, carriages, and high chairs.¹⁶

Who

- Children ages 4 and under, especially under age 1, are at greatest risk for all forms of airway obstruction injury.¹⁷ Children 4 years and under are 15 times more likely to experience a suffocation death than children between 5-14 years of age.¹⁸
- Male and non-white children, as well as children from low-income families, are at increased risk from suffocation, choking and strangulation.^{19 20 21 22}
- Black children are twice as likely as white children to die from suffocation.²³
- Children placed in adult beds are at increased risk for airway obstruction injury. Since 1990, at least 296 children under 2 years of age have died in adult beds as a result of entrapment in the bed structure. Furthermore, 209 children in this age group died in adult beds from smothering as a result of being overlain by another person.^{24 25}

Costs

- The total annual cost of airway obstruction injury among children aged 14 years and under exceeds \$1.5 billion in the United States.
- Children aged 4 years and under account for more than 60 percent of these costs.²⁶

Laws and Regulations

- The Child Safety Protection Act bans any toy intended for use by children under age 3 that may pose a choking, aspiration or ingestion hazard and requires choking hazard warning labels on packaging for these items when intended for use by children ages 3 to 6.²⁷
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued voluntary guidelines for drawstrings on children's clothing to prevent strangulation in the neck and waist drawstrings of upper outerwear garments, such as jackets and sweatshirts.²⁸
- In 1992, the CPSC voted to ban infant cushions, in order to prevent infants from suffocating while sleeping on infant cushions. Banned cushions have all the following features: 1) a flexible fabric covering; 2) is loosely filled with a granular material such as plastic foam beads or pellets; 3) is easily flattened; 4) is capable of conforming to the body or face of an infant; and 5) is intended or promoted for use by children under age one.

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