



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
PO BOX 360
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

www.nj.gov/health

JUDITH M. PERSICHILLI, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner

To: New Jersey EMS Community

From: Candace Gardner, Director, Office of Emergency Medical Services

Date: May 2, 2023

Subject: Anti-Choking Devices

The New Jersey Department of Health (Department) Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) recognizes that there are several devices marketed to be used in the case of a foreign body airway obstruction (choking) in the community setting. Such devices include but are not limited to, Lifevac[®] and Dechoker[®].

After a detailed review of the aforementioned marketed products, OEMS was able to make the following determinations:

- These devices are not approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration.
- Use of this type of device is not within the National EMS Scope of Practice for the management of airway obstruction at any provider level.
- These types of devices are not endorsed for use by healthcare organizations, such as the American Heart Association (AHA).
- There is currently insufficient research documenting safety and efficacy in the use of this device (Dunne et al., 2020; Dunne, Osman, et al., 2022; Dunne, Queiroga, et al., 2022).

The Department is vested with the responsibility of carrying out the provisions of the Health Care Facilities Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 26:2H-1 et seq., which was enacted, in part, to ensure that hospital and related health care services rendered in New Jersey are of the highest quality.

As defined at N.J.S.A. 26:2H-2b, health care services include pre-hospital Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance services and any pre-hospital care rendered by Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. Furthermore, N.J.S.A. 26:2H5 grants the Commissioner of Health the power to inquire into health care services and to conduct periodic inspections with respect to the fitness and adequacy of the equipment and personnel employed by those services. As such, in furtherance of each of the aforementioned statutory objectives, the Department adopted regulations that govern the licensure and inspection of BLS and ALS service providers and their vehicles. Those regulations are set forth in their entirety at N.J.A.C. 8:40, N.J.A.C. 8:41, N.J.A.C. 8:41A, and N.J.A.C. 8:40A.

In conclusion, OEMS does not endorse, nor approve of the utilization of these devices by pre-hospital health care providers (EMTs, paramedics, etc.) in pre-hospital settings or during

non-emergency medical transports. As such, OEMS continues to endorse that pre-hospital providers follow AHA guidelines and the National EMS Scope of Practice for the management of foreign body airway obstruction appropriate to their level of training.

References

- Dechoker. (n.d.). Dechoker - choking airway clearing device. Retrieved March 8, 2023, from <https://www.dechoker.com/>
- Dunne, C. I., Peden, A. E., Queiroga, A. C., Gomez Gonzalez, C., Valesco, B., & Szpilman, D. (2020). A systematic review on the effectiveness of anti-choking suction devices and identification of research gaps. *Resuscitation*, 153, 219–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resuscitation.2020.02.021>
- Dunne, C. L., Osman, S., Viguers, K., Queiroga, A., Szpilman, D., & Peden, A. E. (2022). Phase one of a global evaluation of suction-based airway clearance devices in foreign body airway obstructions: A retrospective descriptive analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(7), 3846. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073846>
- Dunne, C. L., Queiroga, C., Szpiman, D., Viguers, K., Osman, S., & Peden, A. E. (2022). A protocol for the prospective evaluation of novel suction-based airway clearance devices in the treatment of foreign body airway obstructions. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.20918>
- Food and Drug Administration. (n.d.). Devices@fda. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/devicesatfda/index.cfm>
- Lifevac. (n.d.). Official site of lifevac. LifeVac. Retrieved March 8, 2023, from <https://lifevac.net/>
- U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2021, August). National EMS Scope of Practice Model 2019: Including change notices 1.0 and 2.0 [PDF]. https://www.ems.gov/assets/National_EMS_Scope_of_Practice_Model_2019_Change_Notices_1_and-2_August_2021.pdf