

Strangulation Aftercare

Sometimes after being strangled, people develop problems within 24 to 48 hours, or even up to 2 weeks later. These problems could be swelling in the neck area and internal tissues that may block the airway or the major blood vessels carrying blood to your brain. If you are pregnant, strangulation may also harm your baby, possibly resulting in loss of the pregnancy. It is therefore very important to get medical attention and to follow-up with your nurse or doctor, especially in the next few days.

When should I return to the emergency department?

It is very important that you come back to the emergency department right away if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Trouble breathing (such as shortness of breath, and/or much faster breathing)
- Trouble swallowing (that might also include drooling, cough, pain)
- Swelling of the neck or throat
- Increased hoarseness, change, or loss of voice
- Dizziness, light-headedness, loss of consciousness (fainting), or changes in vision such as blurring
- Very bad headache
- Weakness on one side of the body

If you are pregnant, and experience any of the following, come back to the emergency department right away:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Abdominal (stomach) cramping
- If the baby was moving before, but hasn't moved in many hours

How can I care for myself when I go home?

It is a good idea to have a friend stay with you for at least the next 24 to 48 hours, if it is safe to do so.

Bruising, aches, and pains may show up in this time period. Putting ice on any sore areas for 20 minutes, 4 times a day, for the first 2 days after the injury may help to lessen pain and swelling to these areas. You may also put ice on any other areas injured during the assault. Sipping on cold fluids may help to soothe your throat if it feels sore.

For extra relief from pain, ask your doctor or pharmacist to suggest a pain medication.

If it is okay with you, the nurse from the follow-up clinic will call you within 24 to 48 hours to find out how you are doing, and will ask you about any changes or new symptoms.

What if I notice that bruises or other marks have appeared in the days after being strangled?

Injuries are not always noticed at first, and may appear over time. If you have chosen or are thinking about police involvement, and would like to have pictures taken of your injuries, it is a good idea to make an appointment with the follow-up clinic nurse. If the police took pictures of your injuries at the time of the assault and you would like them to take more, you may contact the officer in charge of your case. Some clients have found it useful to write down any changes in symptoms and injuries such as bruising and scratches in a small notebook, if it is safe to do so. You can do this for any injury on your body that happened.

How could I feel after being strangled?

Strangulation involves one person holding the life of another in their hands. Many people who have been strangled often say that they thought they were going to die at the time it happened. This might make you to feel even stronger emotions than are usually felt after physical, sexual, and emotional assault. Emotions you may feel are shock, disbelief, fear, terror, denial, shame, guilt, self-blame, anxiety, anger, and wanting revenge. Some people also have trouble sleeping, nightmares, and flashbacks. If you would like to talk to someone about how you are feeling, you can call the 24 hour assaulted women's helpline anytime: 1.866.863.0511

Who can I call if I have any questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or are worried about your injuries, or about the feelings you are having, you can call the follow-up clinic nurse or leave a voicemail message at (705) 759-5143 from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 4pm. If you feel more comfortable talking to your family doctor or nurse practitioner, please call them.

In the case of an emergency, **call 911** or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

