

To: State of Iowa EMS Service Programs and EMS Clinicians

From: Iowa Bureau of Emergency Medical and Trauma Services

Date: October 9, 2024

Subject: Anti-Choking Devices

The Iowa Bureau of Emergency Medical and Trauma Services (BEMTS) has received inquiries concerning devices that are marketed as “anti-choking” or devices that may be utilized in the case of foreign body airway obstruction in the community setting and if such devices could be used by authorized EMS clinicians and EMS service programs within the State of Iowa. Such devices include, but are not limited to, Lifevac® and Dechoker®.

After review of these products, BEMTS has made the following determinations:

- These devices are not approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration.
 - On April 22, 2024, the FDA transmitted a “safety communication” reporting potential problems with anti-choking devices, actions that the FDA is currently taking, along with recommendations for the general public and health care providers, to include following established choking training and guidance as provided through the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American Red Cross (ARC).
- Use of these types of devices is not within the National EMS Scope of Practice or the Iowa Emergency Medical Care Provider Scope of Practice for managing airway obstruction at any provider level.
- These devices are not referenced in the National Model EMS Clinical Guidelines.
- Healthcare organizations like the AHA and others do not endorse these devices.
- There is insufficient research documenting the safety and efficacy of using these devices.

Concerning this matter and the information that has been reviewed, BEMTS does not endorse nor approve the utilization of these devices by the State of Iowa authorized EMS clinicians of any level or by the State of Iowa authorized EMS service programs. Further research and validation are needed to establish credibility and effectiveness in the EMS setting. BEMTS continues to endorse that EMS clinicians and EMS service programs follow the AHA guidelines for managing foreign body airway obstruction that are appropriate to their level of training and authorization.

References

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