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


