

## Has your partner ever:

- Tried to strangle or 'choke' you? (put hands around your throat)
- Tried to stop you from breathing by putting hands around your neck, pressing against your throat, or smothering you?
- Threatened to kill you, your children, or any other family members or friends?

## Your safety is important

If any of these things are happening to you, then you (and your children) could be in danger of being seriously injured or killed.

**We encourage you to ring Shine's Helpline 0508-744-633 to discuss your situation and the options available to you to become safe.**

Most people get better after a strangulation injury, however sometimes longer term problems or injuries may result. It is important that you seek medical advice from a doctor as soon as possible, and let them know that you have been strangled.

*More information inside...*

Shine acknowledges Cathy Jordan (Registered Psychologist), Massey University, Dr Clare Healy, and Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care, for their assistance in the development of this brochure.

Helping New Zealanders since 1990, Shine is a leading specialist domestic abuse service provider.

Domestic abuse is extremely common in New Zealand. One in three New Zealand women are assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Domestic abuse can also sometimes affect men and always affects children in the family.

For more information about Shine and domestic abuse visit our website:

[www.2shine.org.nz](http://www.2shine.org.nz)

Domestic Abuse Helpline:

**0508 744 633**

We're here to help you.  
Call us, it's free and confidential to talk.  
7 days a week, 9am to 11pm.

Provided by Presbyterian Support Northern.  
Charity #CC21532

[www.facebook.com/shinenz](https://www.facebook.com/shinenz)  
[enquiries@2shine.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@2shine.org.nz)

## Domestic Abuse & Strangulation

Information for people experiencing violence in their relationship.



## Understand your risk

At Shine we help anyone who is living with violence or abuse from a partner, ex-partner, or someone else in their family.

For many victims of domestic violence, living with abuse and fear day in and day out becomes normal. When this happens, it can be harder for victims to realise that their situation is very dangerous.

This information about strangulation may help you to better understand your risk of being seriously injured or killed by your partner.

## Strangulation is very dangerous

Strangulation is when pressure is applied on or around the neck with enough force to stop someone breathing, which means that no oxygen is flowing to the brain. Pressure can be applied in different ways – with one or both hands, or with something like a rope, or anything putting pressure across the throat.

Strangulation is a common and very dangerous way for abusers to control their victims by making them feel afraid or intimidated. Smothering, such as with a pillow, can also control victims with fear.

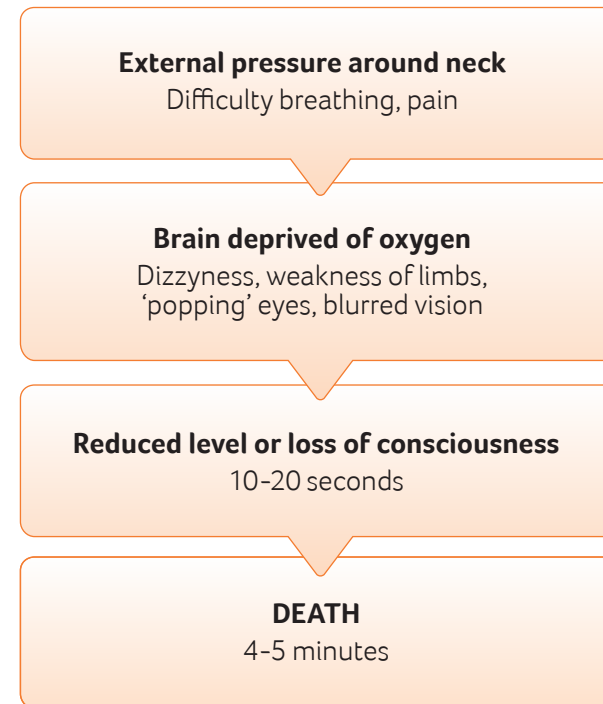
Abusive partners often minimise strangulation and say 'But I never hit you.' It's important to know that strangulation is often more dangerous than hitting, punching or kicking.

If you've been strangled by a partner or ex-partner, you are in greater danger of being seriously injured or killed by them in the future.<sup>1</sup>

## Strangulation Timeline

The diagram below shows what happens when someone is strangled.

A small amount of pressure around the neck can result in **loss of consciousness within 10 to 20 seconds**, and **can cause death within 4 to 5 minutes**.<sup>2</sup>



**Abusers who use strangulation,  
"strangle to show they 'can' kill."<sup>3</sup>**

## Experience of victims

Many victims describe four stages of thought while being strangled<sup>4</sup>:

**Denial** An almost out-of-body experience.

**Realisation** Realisation that they are being strangled quickly overcomes denial.

**Primal** A vigorous struggle ensues in an attempt to preserve airway and life.

**Resignation** Tiring victims resign themselves to dying and often wonder who will take care of their children

Immediately afterwards, victims may be relieved they are still alive. Over time, victims often minimise the experience: "It's not like he hit me."

In the hours, days or even weeks after being strangled, victims may<sup>5</sup>:

- find it difficult to breathe, talk, or swallow
- have neck and throat pain, coughing
- vomit or feel nauseous
- have loss of bladder or bowel control
- have ringing in the ears, dizziness, headaches, memory loss
- feel confused, disoriented, restless or tired

Often there are no visible injuries, but there may be serious internal injuries such as brain damage. It is important to go to a doctor for medical advice as soon as possible. You need to tell the doctor you have been strangled, so they know what to look for.

Ask the doctor to document any injuries for future reference and potentially as evidence.

<sup>1</sup> Glass, N., Laughon, K., Campbell, J., Block, C.R., Hanson, G., Sharps, P.W., Taliaferro, E. (2008). Non-fatal strangulation is an important risk factor for homicide of women. *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 35(3), 329-335.

<sup>2</sup> Healy, C. (2016). Getting to grips with strangulation [Presentation]. Auckland, NZ: Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care.

<sup>3</sup> Strack, G.B., & Gwinn, C. (2011). On the edge of homicide: Strangulation as a prelude. *Criminal Justice*, 26(3). American Bar Association.

<sup>4</sup> Clane, G.B. Strack, & D. Hawley. (2001). A Review of 300 Attempted Strangulation Cases Part II: Clinical Evaluation of the Surviving Victim, *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 21(3), 311-315.

<sup>5</sup> Special Collection: Traumatic Brain Injury and domestic violence: Understanding the Intersections. VAWnet ([www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org)).