

# For help and support

Women are the main victims of strangulation and suffocation however anyone can be a victim of this offence.

There is information on help and support available to all victims of this crime at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/nfs](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/nfs) or by using the confidential 24 hour domestic and sexual abuse helpline: **0808 802 1414**

Call PSNI on **101** to report a crime.

**IN AN EMERGENCY  
ALWAYS CALL 999**

## Other help and support organisations

### 24/7 Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline

freephone: 0808 802 1414

email: [help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org)

web: [www.dsahelpline.org](http://www.dsahelpline.org)

### Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

telephone: 028 9024 9041

email: [info@womensaidni.org](mailto:info@womensaidni.org)

### Victim Support Northern Ireland

telephone: 028 9024 3133 (Belfast)  
028 7137 0086 (Foyle)

email: [belfast@victimsupportni.org.uk](mailto:belfast@victimsupportni.org.uk)  
[foyle@victimsupportni.org.uk](mailto:foyle@victimsupportni.org.uk)

Visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/nfs](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/nfs), call PSNI on **101** or the confidential 24 hour helpline **0808 802 1414**.

# Non-fatal strangulation is a crime.

With up to 14-years in prison, whatever the excuse.



**Police Service**  
of Northern Ireland



Department of  
**Justice**

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Máinnstríe o tha Laa  
[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)



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# Strangulation and suffocation

**Strangulation or suffocation is an offence, whether it causes injury or not.**

**There are serious penalties for anyone who is found guilty of these offences.**

**Those convicted of a non-fatal strangulation offence can face up to 14 years in prison.**

Strangulation can be a purely violent act, or can happen during domestic abuse, or in intimate relationships as part of experimental or 'rough' sex. Even in this context, serious injury can easily result, and where that happens, the consent of the injured person is not a defence.

In domestic abuse cases strangulation can be used to control a victim. It can be used to assert dominance and power over the victim, and to let them know that their abuser can decide whether they live or die. Unconsciousness may occur within seconds, and death within minutes. It is important that victims understand this serious risk, as people who use strangulation in cases of domestic abuse are up to 8 times more likely to go on to murder their partner.

Serious injury can be caused by using as little pressure as that used to open a tin of cola. Despite this, there are often few or no visible injuries to the victim, and this can lead to potentially serious harm being overlooked.

## Signs to look for

There may be no visible signs, but some of these may be present following a strangulation.



**If you are reporting a crime, and have any visible signs of injury, then photographs may be useful to help support your report.**

## Other injuries

Non-fatal strangulation or suffocation will cause a lack of blood flow to the brain, which can also cause serious injuries, many of which leave no marks.

### Some common injuries include:

#### Voice Changes

Raspy and/or hoarse voice, coughing, unable to speak, complete loss of voice.

#### Swallowing Changes

Trouble swallowing, painful swallowing, neck pain, nausea/vomiting, drooling.

#### Breathing Problems

Difficulty breathing, hyperventilation, unable to breathe.

#### Behavioural and Psychological Changes

Restlessness, aggressiveness, problems concentrating, amnesia, agitation, post-traumatic stress disorder, hallucinations, depression, anxiety.

#### Vision Changes

Complete loss or black & white vision, seeing 'stars', blurry, darkness, fuzzy around the eyes.

#### Other

Brain injury, memory loss, unconsciousness, dizziness, headaches, miscarriage, stroke, seizures, involuntary urination or defecation, loss of strength, going limp.