

# Jonathan Rosenfeld's Nursing Homes Abuse Blog

## Nursing Home Blamed For Resident Choking To Death On Raw Cukes

*Posted by **Jonathan Rosenfeld** on January 18, 2011*

On May 29, 2010, a resident of **Bethesda Heritage Center**, a nursing home in Minnesota, died after **choking** on raw cucumbers that the facility never have should even served to her. The Minnesota Department of Health (**MDH**) cited the facility for neglect.

The elderly female choking victim had been admitted to the facility two years earlier with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (**COPD**), swallowing difficulties, and anxiety. Her diet banned raw vegetables and any other food that was not well cooked because of swallowing problems.

Despite this seemingly clear restriction, staff members fed her raw cucumbers in cream sauce. The staff members later explained that they thought the cucumbers were ok because they were soft and served in cream sauce . . . even though the cucumbers were still raw.

After being fed the raw cucumbers, the resident began choking. A staff member performed the Heimlich maneuver, causing her to expel a mouthful of food. However, she was still having trouble breathing, so an ambulance was called. The resident was taken to the emergency room at Rice Memorial Hospital where she died of respiratory failure and choking.

The Minnesota Department of Health found that Bethesda did not have an adequate method for identifying a patient's diet when serving meals. After this unfortunate and preventable choking death, the facility retrained staff on residents' dietary requirements and now requires both nursing and dietary employees to check that meals comply with the resident's diet.

Jonathan Rosenfeld represents victims of nursing home abuse and neglect throughout the country. For more information please visit Nursing Homes Abuse Blog ([www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com](http://www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com)), Bed Sore FAQ ([www.bedsorefaq.com](http://www.bedsorefaq.com)) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757.

Medicare rates Bethesda Heritage Center as a four-star facility (out of five stars), which is an above average rating. However, Bethesda is a large, 128-bed facility. Even facilities with above average ratings can have problems. In this case, the facility's thoughtless oversight resulted in the death of one of its residents. Unfortunately, choking deaths are all too common in nursing homes (See "[Nursing Homes Abuse Blog: Choking](#)"). Therefore, it is important that the staff remain vigilant and follow orders to the letter.

Thanks to Heather Keil, J.D. for her assistance with this Nursing Homes Abuse Blog entry.

Sources:

[Star Tribune: Wilmar Nursing Home Blamed For Resident Choking To Death On Raw Cukes](#)

[Minnesota Department of Health: Health Care Facilities Programs](#)

[West Central Tribune: Bethesda Cited After Resident Chokes to Death](#)

[KSAX-TV: Choking Death Sparks Changes at Wilmar Retirement Home](#)

[Nursing Homes Abuse Blog: Choking](#)

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