

Teens and the Deadly Trend of Choking(or the “Blackout Game”)

LouAnn Viado and Tom Griffin

What is it? Teenagers are using belts, ties, bags, their own hands, or any other item that can cause oxygen deprivation. Pressure is applied to blood vessels or oxygen to the lungs is cut off causing a reduction of oxygen to the heart and brain. The blood pressure is reduced, and the body begins the process of dying. The number of young victims who have died while playing this game is unclear, as many deaths can appear to be suicides. This experience can become addictive.

Why do teens do it? This activity may be a substitute for substance abuse. Participants have easy access to this activity. This activity begins as a social activity, with one participant assisting in reviving the other. The experience can become so addictive that the participant will engage in the activity alone.

Other names for choking: space monkey, space cowboy, knockout, gasp, rising sun, the American Dream game (Ireland), pass out game, tingling game, fainting game

Warning signs and tips for parents:

- Severe headaches
- Marks on the neck
- Bloodshot eyes
- Broken blood vessels on the face, neck, or head area
- Be aware of ropes, ties, dog leashes or other paraphernalia that could be used for choking
- Be aware of closed doors/closet

If you suspect your child is involved in this activity:

- Increase supervision; similar to a suicide watch, be very aware of your child’s whereabouts and activities.
- Remove any paraphernalia that could be used for choking.
- Educate your child about choking. Many young kids do not know they can die from participating in this activity.
- Alert school personnel (principal, nurse, counselor, school police, teachers, etc.) of your concerns so that they can better monitor your child as well as other students at the school. Typically, if one student is involved in an activity, others are involved as well.
- Consider alerting the parents of your children’s friends.
- Contact a mental health professional, as counseling and support may be appropriate for you, your child, and/or your family.
- Consult with a physician to explore and address any health needs that have resulted due to participation in this activity.
- If an older teen is involved, younger children in the same family may be at risk for participating in this activity. Children as young as 10 years old have died from this activity.

This information was obtained from the following websites: www.news.yahoo.com, www.cnn.worldnews.printthis.clickability.com, www.abnews.go.com, www.lungdiseases.about.com, www.connectwithkids.com