

The Choking Game

What is it?

Acting alone or with friends, the goal of the choking game is to use belts, ties or bare hands to choke oneself and constrict blood flow enough to nearly pass out and then release. The reduced blood flow and lack of oxygen to the brain causes lightheadedness (the “high”) and the release allows a surge of blood back to the brain which causes a “rush.”

Other names for the choking game

Space Monkey, Blackout, Rising Sun, Knockout, Passing Out Game, Dreaming, Fainting Game, Flat Liner, Black Out and Funky Chicken.

Who’s doing it?

The choking game is most popular among 9- to 14-year-olds. Very often, those playing the choking game are healthy teens looking for a “drug free” high. More often than not, the teens and pre-teens playing the game do so out of curiosity—not rebellion, depression or anger.

Why it is so dangerous?

Dozens of middle and high school students have died or suffered brain damage over the past several months from playing the choking game. Death or brain damage can occur when children try to play the game by themselves using ties or belts. These children can unintentionally pass out and there’s no one there to remove the “noose.” All children who play the game (either with friends or alone) can lose consciousness within one minute and die in as little as two to four minutes.

Many children don’t see the harm in playing the choking game because it does not involve drugs or alcohol. They are often fascinated by the prospect of getting high without using drugs. Although the behavior has been around for many years, it’s possible (and probable) that the internet is simply making it easier to distribute information on the activity to children.

Signs and symptoms you should look for

Severe headaches	Raspy breath
Bloodshot or red eyes	Belts, ties, etc. found around the house
Marks on the neck	An unusual need for privacy

Talking about the choking game with children

Parents and teachers should openly discuss the dangers of the choking game, just as they would discuss the dangers of using illicit drugs and alcohol. Acknowledge that it’s normal for children and teens to take risks, but that risk taking should be channeled into more positive activities like trying out for a sports team or other recreational activities. Explain that the choking game has been around for generations and sadly, kids who are uninformed about the dangers are dying.

For more information, contact the Weller Health Education Center at 610-258-8500, ext. 10.