



VSAAC Action Alert

The “Choking Game”

Ask any adolescent between the ages of 11 and 15 about the choking game and they will know of peers who are engaging in this deadly game. Also called the *Pass Out* game, *Black Out* game or *Flat Line* game, it is a method of asphyxiation whereby a person cuts off the supply of oxygen to the brain for a rush or “high”.

Students will perform the technique on each other by pressing their thumbs against the carotid artery. The blood loss to the brain would cause the student to pass out for a moment. The resulting rush of blood to the brain once the pressure has been released causes a tingling and slight sense of euphoria. The “game” is played at parties in homes, after school in hallways and schoolyards, and, in their own bedrooms.

Adolescents who have engaged in self-asphyxiation when alone, have used belts or ropes to achieve the same deadly high. Those who have died from this practice have been mistakenly ruled as suicide. Children are misled in believing that this activity is safe because it is not illegal.

The topic has made front page news and recent talk shows have featured parents who have lost a child because of this risky behavior:

“Between 400 and 500 kids a year die from this game....And that doesn’t count those that have serious injuries, get tracheotomies, have strokes, memory loss, or other neurological impairment” - Dr. Phil McGraw

Kyle Kelly McCarth, 13, died 10/10/05 in Wisconsin. Kyle used a cloth rope in the basement to make himself unconscious. His father discovered him fifteen minutes later and revived him using 911 directed CPR. Kyle never regained consciousness and died the following morning in at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Chelsea Dunn, 13, Nampa, ID 4/14/05 Her family said the game was popular with a group of girls at her school. Six girls were suspended for a day after a security camera tape showed the seventh-graders choking each other in a hallway.

“The best thing to prevent any more deaths is to talk to children . The danger is in pretending it doesn’t exist. Kids already know about the game. It’s the parents who are clueless. It’s not as though your telling them something they don’t already know”

- Dr. Thomas Andrew, Pediatrician & Medical Examiner

Warning Signs for parents, teachers, counselors:

- Blood shot eyes or pinpoint red marks around eyes
- Severe Headaches
- Marks on neck
- Any unusual ligature-type items tied in strange knots
- A need for more privacy than usual

If you would like more information, contact Lorrie Driscoll, VSAAC Prevention Coordinator, at (203) 736-8566, or email: ldriscoll@bghealth.org