

The "Choking Game"

Understanding the dangers

The Choking Game achieves a brief high or euphoric state by stopping the flow of oxygen containing blood to the brain. Sometimes children choke each other until the person being choked passes out. The pressure on the arteries is then released and blood flow to the brain resumes causing a "rush" as consciousness returns.

Variations of this activity involve hyper-ventilating until the participant loses consciousness. There is a lesser chance of death but it is still not safe. Playing this game in any form causes the permanent and cumulative death of large numbers of brain cells. The variation in blood pressure may also cause strokes, seizures, and retinal damage. The danger becomes even greater when a ligature is used and the activity is performed by a lone child.

If the child loses consciousness and there is no one there to IMMEDIATELY release the pressure, he is unable to help himself. The child will suffer brain damage and death certainly after three minutes.

How Do Children Play This Game?

This is done by compressing the chest or squeezing the neck with hands or ligature devices such as ropes, cords or belts; children playing this "game" temporarily starve the brain of oxygen so as to induce a short lived artificial high. Most dangerous when done alone, the game is also played in groups and the sensations can become habit-forming. Children are reporting that they believe this game to be a "safe" way to seek a "high" as it does not involve taking drugs. This logic indicates that kids have no idea how dangerous this activity is and that they are unaware of the potentially deadly consequences.

Why Do Children Participate?

Some do this to achieve "high" without drugs or alcohol. There is no intent to harm selves or others and they are often unaware of dangerous consequences. Some succumb to curiosity and or peer pressure and this also is a time when teen and pre-teen students are experimenting with bodies and feelings.

What Are Signs My Child Is Playing?

Parents are encouraged to watch for warning signs that indicate possible participation in this activity such as:

- Unexplained marks or bruises on neck
- Short ropes, cords, belts, leashes, or neck ties in odd knots or found in unusual locations
- Blood shot eyes
- Complaints of headaches
- Petechiae (tiny red dots) on face or cheeks
- Disorientation after spending time alone
- Unusual demands for privacy or locked doors
- Chat room conversations about game or websites visited

What Other Names Does It Have?

Airplaning, american dream game, blackout game, choking game, dream game or dreaming game, fainting game, flatline game or flatliner game, funky chicken, hyperventilation game, knockout game, passout game, rising sun game, space cowboy or space monkey, suffocation game, or suffocation roulette, teen choking game and tingling game

Who Plays The Game?

- Primarily kids in age range 9-15
- Middle School- although not exclusively
- Kids as young as 6 or 7 especially if they have older siblings playing this "game"
- High achievers not using drugs or alcohol
- Kids looking for a Thrill Seeking Activity
- Kids looking for a "Secret" Activity

Source: *Teen Association, Inc. Newsletter* (<http://www.teenchokinggame.com/>)