

THE CHOKING GAME

A fact sheet for parents and teachers

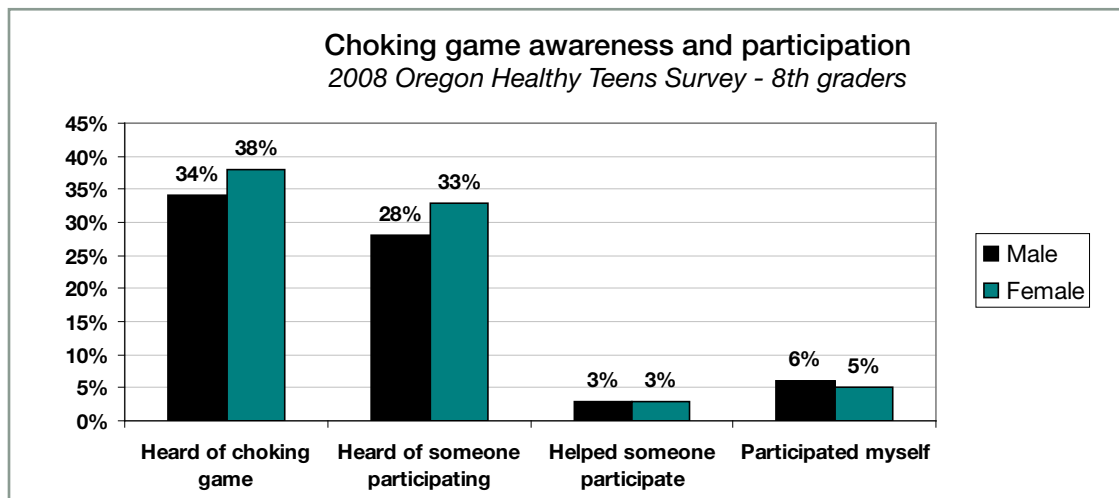
What is it?

The “choking game” is a strangulation activity that some youth may participate in to achieve a “high-like” sensation. It involves cutting off circulation to the carotid artery with a rope, belt, hands, or holding your breath. It may occur alone or in groups.

The choking game is different from autoerotic asphyxiation (AEA), which has a sexual component and is almost always done alone.

Also known as...

Pass Out Game, Fainting Game, Black Out, Knock Out, Flatline Game



What are the signs and symptoms?

- It can be hard to identify – there may not be any signs of past participation.
- Some possible signs might be: bloodshot eyes, frequent headaches, inexplicable bruising or red marks around the neck, disorientation/grogginess after being alone, or finding belts or ties on doorknobs or bedposts.

Who participates in this?

- Any youth could be susceptible to participating. They may believe it is safe and fun. They may have participated in it before without anything bad happening.
- Youth who have mental health risks and/or use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs may be more likely to participate in strangulation activities.
- About 6 percent of Oregon eighth graders (2,600 students) say they have participated in the choking game. About 30 percent (13,000 students) say they have heard of someone else participating.

What can parents and teachers do?

Talk to youth. Find out what is going on in their lives. This behavior may be associated with other issues and you may want to involve a health or mental health professional for more assistance.

Important messages to share with youth are:

- If you know someone who is doing this, you should tell a trusted adult. It's not safe.
- This is a dangerous activity that could be harmful to you or your friends. Some youth have done this and suffered injury, brain damage or death.

Understand that risk-taking is a normal and important part of growing up. Encourage healthy alternatives that youth might enjoy. These activities could be physical, social, community-oriented or creative. Some examples are:

- Snowboarding, rock climbing or martial arts;
- Participating in art, music, theater or dance;
- Developing new supportive relationships with an adult or group of friends;
- Volunteering to build houses or work with younger kids; or
- Taking an advanced or elective class.

Make sure your youth has had a checkup (well visit) in the past year, including a comprehensive risk assessment, which can help identify important health and mental health issues.



Resources and more information

For help finding a health or mental health professional in Oregon, contact SAFENET at 1-800-SAFENET (1-800-723-3638) or www.oregonsafenet.org.

For more information on the choking game, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention article at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5901a1.htm.



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