

# ***The Choking Game / The Blackout Challenge***

## **What You Need To Know**

The *Choking Game* is not new but in this age of social media challenges, children and teens are engaging in an activity that can cause permanent brain injury and even death.

## **What Is It, Exactly?**

The *Choking Game* is not really a game at all – it is a strangulation activity in which children and teenagers cut off oxygen circulation to the brain to achieve a brief sensation of euphoria or a “high” when they lose or nearly lose consciousness. This may be through the use of a rope, belt, scarf, hands, or arms around the neck. It can also be achieved by breath holding, and then having pressure applied to the chest by a shove or tight hug.

## **Who Is Participating?**

Nationally and around the world, it is mostly boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 16 although a study by the Centers for Disease Control found deaths as a result of this “game” in children as young as 6 and as old as 19. **It is estimated that 6-16% of children have engaged in this behavior**, and they are often children who engage in other risk-taking behaviors.

## **Other Names for “The Choking Game”**



The Institute is a program of [Alliance for HOPE International](#).

**Blackout Challenge**

**California High**

**Faint Challenge**

**Flatliner**

**Headrush**

**Pass Out Challenge**

**Rising Sun**

**Space Cowboy**

**Space Monkey**

**Suffocation Roulette**

**Tap Out**

For more information, reach out to your primary care provider or you can contact **The Children's Place** for resources at **(907) 357 - 5157**

This informational brochure was created in collaboration with the Pediatric Subcommittee of the [Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention's](#) Medical Committee.



**What adults need to know about**

**the CHOKING  
game**

# what you need to know about the CHOKING game

## Why Should You Worry?

Starving the brain of oxygen even for seconds can result in the death of brain cells. It is estimated that a total lack of oxygen causes the loss of 32,000 neurons (brain nerve cells) per second and 230 million synapses (the connections between brain cells) per second. And unfortunately, most brain cells do not grow back. Loss of consciousness can occur within 2-4 minutes.

In a study called "The Choking Game on YouTube," 23% of the videos showed the participant having seizures which are almost certainly from lack of oxygen to the brain. Potential risks include permanent brain damage, problems with memory (and therefore learning), stroke, damage to the retina (in the back of the eye), and death.

## What Can You Do?

- Know the warning signs – but remember that children have died the first time they try this
- Engage and openly communicate with your child about issues that are important to them
- Promote positive, healthy activities like sports, music, art, dance, volunteering
- Remember that youth think this is safe – educate your child that it is not
- Help your child have a response if they are ever asked to play, like "No thanks, I need all the brain cells I've got" or "No it's stupid and it can kill you"
- Consider help from a medical provider and/or call your doctor

## What To Watch Out For?

*Even without any noticeable signs/symptoms, your child could still be considering or participating in the choking game.*

It's important to always monitor what children and teens are exposed to online and through their friendships.

Some of the signs/symptoms you could potentially encounter in your child or teen are:

- Unexplained marks on neck
- Small red dots on eyelids, face, white of eyes
- Frequent severe headaches
- Disorientation after spending time alone
- Wearing clothing to disguise marks on neck
- Unexplained presence of ropes, scarves, belts, leashes or other potential ligatures tied to bedroom furniture, doorknobs, or closet rods.

## The TikTok Blackout Challenge in the News

Bloomberg Businessweek in 2022 documented 20 children who had died while filming their TikTok blackout challenge in the previous 18 months; 15 were aged 12 or younger. A number of parents sued TikTok as a result. It is likely there are far more deaths, as they may get classified as suicides.

**Most deaths have occurred when youth are engaging in the activity alone and using ligatures.**

