

# THE CHOKING GAME

*A fact sheet for parents and teachers*

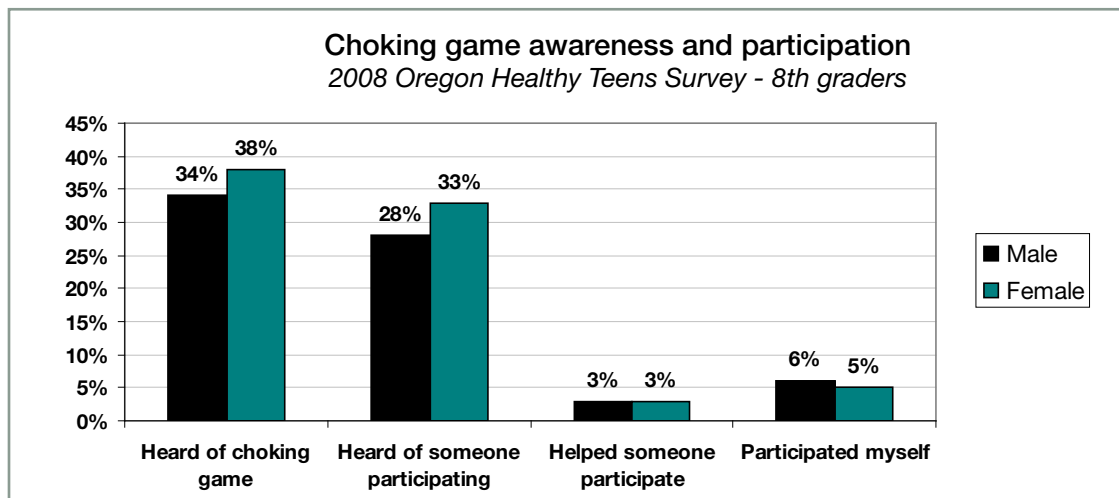
## What is it?

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](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5901a1.htm).



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