

Choking game prevalent among teens in Texas

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Nearly one out of seven college students surveyed at a Texas university has participated in the Choking Game, a dangerous behavior where blood flow is deliberately cut off to the brain in order to achieve a high, according to a study by The Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University.

The Choking Game, also known as the Fainting Game, Pass Out, or Space Monkey, is played individually or in groups and involves manually choking oneself or others, applying a ligature around the neck or a plastic bag over the head, placing heavy objects on the chest, or hyperventilating to attain a euphoric feeling. This practice has led to several suffocation deaths in Texas and across the country.

"This study was undertaken to determine who is playing the game, in what context, and how they learned about it," said Dr. Glen Kercher, director of the Crime Victims' Institute. "It is our hope that these findings will inform efforts by parents, schools, and community agencies to warn young people about the dangers of participating in the Choking Game."

The study was based on a survey completed by 837 students at a Texas university. Among the findings were:

- 16% percent of students reported having played the game; 72% reportedly played the game more than once

- Males were more likely to have played than females
- The average age when students first played the game was 14
- 90% of those who played the game first heard about it from peers
- Most students reported that others were present when they first played the game
- Curiosity about the effects of the Choking Game was a primary motivation for playing the game
- Learning about the potential dangers in engaging in this activity served as a deterrent for the majority of non-participants.

"Even though awareness of the Choking Game is growing, it should be noted that [encouragement](#) for parents to discuss this activity with their children should still be stressed," said Brittany Longino Smith, who co-authored the study "The Choking Game" with Dr. Kercher and Dr. Leana Bouffard, an Associate Professor at SHSU.

A similar study on the Choking Game found that 90 percent of parents would support incorporating information on the behavior in health and drug prevention classes.

While preventative programs have increased to help warn adolescents of the use of illegal substances, the Choking Game is another method of achieving similar effects that has been introduced to this age group.

"This 'game,' as it is often called, does not require obtaining any drugs or alcohol, is free, and can go undetected by many parents, teachers, physicians, and other authority figures. Most importantly, many of those who engage in this activity, do not understand that the practice can be just as deadly as the illegal substances youth have been warned against," the study found.

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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