

Teething baby? Avoid benzocaine, FDA says

July 29 2012



This over-the-counter anesthetic can lead to a deadly condition in children.

(HealthDay) -- Parents should not use benzocaine products to relieve teething pain in babies except under the advice and supervision of a health care professional, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says.

Benzocaine is a [local anesthetic](#) found in over-the-counter products such as Anbesol, Orajel, Baby Orajel, Orabase and Hurricane.

The use of benzocaine gels and liquids to relieve gum and mouth pain can lead to a rare but potentially deadly condition called methemoglobinemia, in which the amount of oxygen carried through the [bloodstream](#) is greatly reduced. Children under 2 years old are at particular risk for the condition, the FDA said in a news release.

The agency first warned about the potential dangers of benzocaine in 2006 and has since received 29 reports of benzocaine gel-related cases of methemoglobinemia. Nineteen of those cases occurred in children, 15 of them under 2 years of age.

The FDA also noted that parents may have difficulty recognizing the symptoms of methemoglobinemia, which include: pale, gray or blue-colored skin, lips and nail beds; [shortness of breath](#); fatigue; confusion; headache; light-headedness and [rapid heart rate](#).

Symptoms can occur within minutes to hours after benzocaine use, and after using the drug for the first time or after several uses. Parents should immediately call 911 (or the local emergency number outside the United States) if a child has symptoms of methemoglobinemia after being given benzocaine, the FDA said in the news release.

Instead of using benzocaine to ease teething pain, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that parents give a child a teething ring chilled in the refrigerator, or use a finger to gently rub or massage the child's gums.

More information: The MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia has more about [teething](#).

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Citation: Teething baby? Avoid benzocaine, FDA says (2012, July 29) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-teething-baby-benzocaine-fda.html>

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