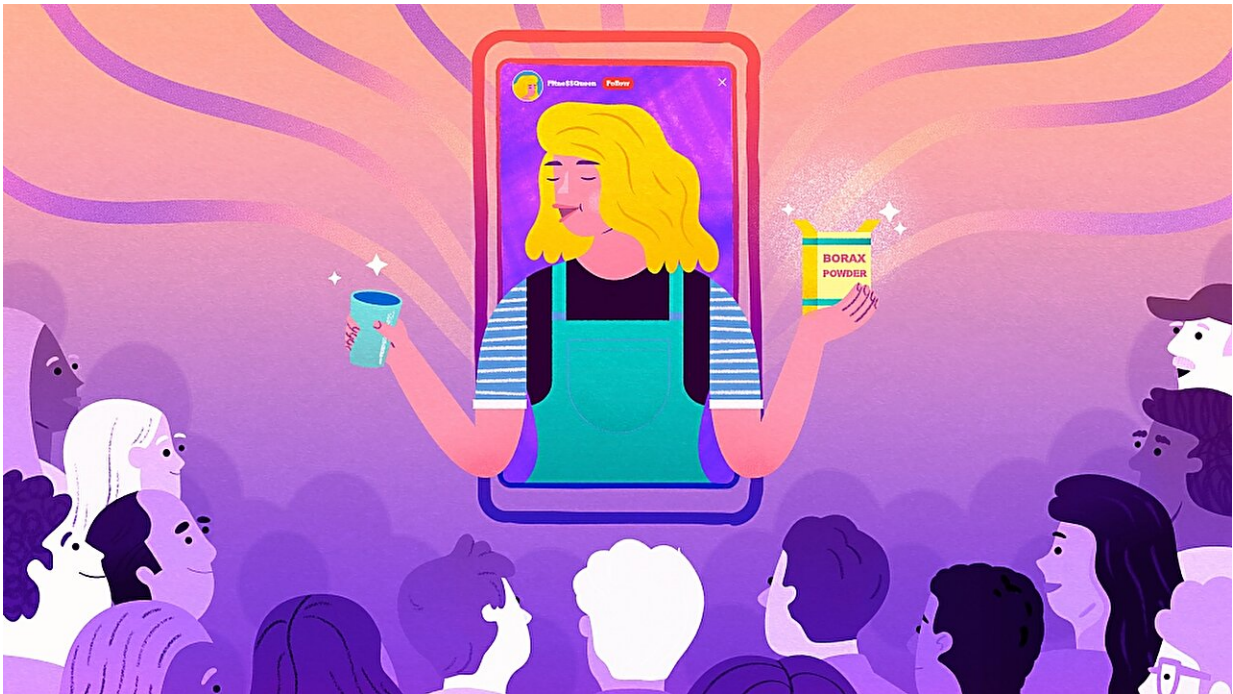


Despite social media claims, Borax is not safe to consume

August 15 2023, by Tessa Roy



Jacob Dwyer, Michigan Medicine. Credit: Jacob Dwyer, Michigan Medicine

Another day, another slew of social media posts promoting dangerous activities in the name of health.

In a callback to the TidePod-eating trend from a few years ago, the latest TikTok trend has people consuming Borax—yes, the laundry powder—claiming it helps with various forms of pain and inflammation.

Various videos show people taking a pinch of the powder straight from the box and drinking it with a glass of water.

The trend has [health professionals](#) coming out in droves to warn against the practice, naming multiple harmful things that can happen to the body after consuming Borax.

And kidneys are just one of the organs that can experience harm from the Borax.

Here, [Karthik Ramani, MBBS](#), explains the dangers this trend can pose to these essential parts of the body.

To your knowledge, why are people consuming Borax?

Ramani: People are consuming Borax as part of social media/ tik-tok trend to potentially treat inflammation, to improve bone [health](#), reduce osteoarthritis and pain.

Borax contains boron, which people claim is the source of Borax's "benefits." Does boron actually support kidney health? If so, what is a safer way to work it into your diet?

Ramani: Per the National Institute of Health boron is a trace element that is naturally present in many foods and is not classified as an essential nutrient for humans because research hasn't yet identified a clear biological function for boron.

Boron is excreted primarily in the urine, and its benefits on [kidney](#)

health is unclear.

There are some animal models which have shown potential benefit of boron on having antioxidant effects and unclear benefit on kidney stones.

Plant foods—including fruit, tubers, and legumes—contain the largest amounts of [boron](#) and is the safest way to incorporate it into your diet.

Why is this dangerous, and what kind of damage can this do to your kidneys?

Ramani: Borax is not Boron—it's a powdery white substance, also known as sodium borate, sodium tetraborate, or disodium tetraborate.

It is not a food-grade substance, a [dietary ingredient](#), pharmaceutical and/or over the counter [active ingredient](#), nor food additive or direct additive to foods and the US FDA has not approved it for [human consumption](#) as a food or beverage.

There are a few case reports of acute poisoning causing [acute kidney failure](#) and multi-organ damage.

What is it like to live with or experience kidney failure? What kind of care does it require?

Ramani: When one has acute kidney failure they can present with uremic symptoms (nausea, vomiting, fatigue, malaise, itching, swelling of the feet) which may warrant admission in a hospital and needing dialysis to clear toxins and fluids periodically.

What should someone do if they do believe they're

experiencing kidney issues due to Borax consumption?

Ramani: If you believe you're experiencing kidney issues due to Borax consumption you should contact a qualified health care professional, the local poison center or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

Symptoms of the poisoning may include severe symptoms of nausea, vomiting, skin rashes, an allergic reaction, [respiratory problems](#), seizures, lack of responsiveness and significantly decreased urine output.

Do you have any advice for families or parents of kids who may be susceptible to trying dangerous trends like this?

Ramani: I would caution families or parents of children from trying dangerous trends or fads like this on [social media](#) without first obtaining verifiable information from qualified websites such as FDA, NIH and consulting qualified healthcare professionals.

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Despite social media claims, Borax is not safe to consume (2023, August 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-08-social-media-borax-safe-consume.html>

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