

Know! To Beware of the Benadryl Challenge

There's a dangerous new TikTok game that parents should know about—the ***Benadryl Challenge***. The idea is to take as many Benadryl tablets as necessary to hallucinate or “trip out,” while of course capturing it all on one’s cellphone to then share with others. [**A 15-year-old Oklahoma girl died last month attempting this challenge, and three more Texas teens ended up in the hospital.**](#)

The Benadryl Challenge Can Be Harmful

Benadryl is an over-the-counter medicine used to treat seasonal and other allergies and is a product many of us have on hand for the occasional bug bite or accidental contact with poison ivy. Because it is so commonly used and does not call for a prescription, young people may have a false sense of security when taking it.

In an interview with Forbes, David Juurlink, MD, head of the division of clinical pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Toronto in Canada, said that when taken at the proper dosage, Benadryl is mostly safe, though it tends to cause drowsiness. He warns however not to underestimate the dangers of this drug when taken inappropriately or at high doses.

Overdose symptoms in young people and adults include:

- Involuntary movements
- Blurred vision, dry eyes and dry mouth
- Inability to sweat and pass urine
- Restlessness and agitation
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Heart arrhythmia
- Trouble breathing
- Seizure
- Coma
- Death

How You Can Help Your Kids

What is a parent to do? By reading this tip, you are already taking a step in the right direction by becoming aware. But you must also be aware that as this Internet challenge fades out, another is sure to follow, which is why it is so important to talk with our teens about the health and safety risks of this and other online challenges.

Here are some points to keep in mind as you do:

- Don't assume your child won't try it: Remember, a teen's brain is not fully developed. Impulsivity, peer pressure, and competitive desire to one-up a peer are all powerful influencers.
- Set clear boundaries: Share your expectations and what you consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behavior. What your child thinks is okay, may not be okay with you.

- State (and restate) the obvious: While taking medicine for the “fun of it” seems unfathomable to you, make no assumptions when it comes to your child’s safety. Additionally, make sure they know that even over-the-counter medications can have powerful and dangerous side effects.
- Prompt critical thinking: Ask your child, “What do you think could happen if you do this?” In the face of such a challenge, help your child learn to step back for a moment and apply basic logic and reason before making a decision that could impact his/her health and safety, as well as your trust.
- Keep it positive: Though you may be tempted to focus solely on the dangerous consequences, remember that youth are hard-wired to defend against negative messages or scare tactics. It is important to educate them on the risk; however, you must also emphasize what they *should* do, like resisting peer pressure, making healthy decisions for themselves, and never encouraging others to put themselves at risk.

We can also take the measure of locking up our medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter. Benadryl is not a difficult drug for youth to get their hands on, however, this will eliminate the number one location young people access medications for recreational use—the family medicine cabinet.

TikTok has reportedly removed all content relating to the Benadryl Challenge. But, it would be naive to think that is where it ends, or to think we will ever keep up with all the latest Internet trends, dangerous or not. What we *can* do is talk to our children, set clear boundaries, and teach them to think critically before the next risky challenge presents itself.

Sources

[Toni Birdsong. McAfee Blog Central: Digital Dares: Dumb Kids with Smart Phones, September 23, 2014.](#)

[Medical News Today: Benadryl \(diphenhydramine\). May 2019.](#)

[Victoria Forster, Forbes: Teen Dies After Doing TikTok ‘Benadryl Challenge’ As Doctors Warn Of Dangers. Sept. 2020.](#)