

CORPUS CHRISTI-NUECES COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT



1702 Horne Road
Corpus Christi, Texas 78416
PHONE (361) 826-7200 FAX (361) 826-4526

March 10, 2010

Press Release

Contact: Noelia Rodriguez, Public Information Officer
Office: 361-826-7220,
Email address: noeliar@cctexas.com

HEALTH DISTRICT WARNS DOCTORS AND PARENTS TO LEARN ABOUT THE CHOKING GAME AMONG YOUTH

Following a recent announcement made by the American Medical Journal the Corpus Christi-Nueces County Public Health District is advising local pediatricians, family doctors and parents to be aware of the signs of an increasing number of a youth activity called the "choking games".

In the December 29, 2009 issue of the AMJ, an article written by Tanya Albert Henry points out that the choking game involves participants trying to get a high from depriving oxygen to the brain. Children and young adults, generally age 7 to 21, let another person use his or her hands to apply pressure to the neck to cut off oxygen.

"Signs to look out for are bruises around the neck, unexplained headaches and bloodshot eyes, these are common signs that a young person may be playing this risky game," states William Burgin, Jr., M.D., local health authority for the Public Health District. According to the December report, they can also use belts, neckties, or other methods to get a high. In some cases, a participant takes a deep breath and holds it while another person hugs from behind until the recipient begins to feel dizzy and then passes out.

A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report analyzed media accounts and estimated 82 probable choking-game-related deaths from 1995 to 2007. Studies have shown injuries such as seizures, headaches, fractures and brain damage, ranging from subtle cognitive impairment to persistent vegetative state.

"The full extent of the injuries and deaths caused by the choking game is likely underrepresented by these accounts because many of the cases are never reported or may be classified as suicides," the report stated.

-more-

Other signs to be aware of are

- curiosity about asphyxiation;
- frequent, often severe, headaches;
- wear marks on furniture such as bunk beds or closet rods
- unusual demands for privacy; and locked or blocked bathroom doors

Dr. Burgin advises local physicians and parents to take the time to learn to recognize the warning signs that kids and teens are playing the game and prompt them to ask all their adolescent patients about it.

#