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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! The Dangers of Digital Dares

Thinking back to our younger years, most of us have witnessed or actively took part in some type of dare or challenge that involved unwise behavior. Similar types of double-dog-dares, referred to as “challenges,” still exist for our children today, however, the audience, the peer pressure and the danger element has increased beyond compare.

In the past, dares were likely to take place on school grounds, public parks or in someone’s basement - in front of a handful of peers, at best. Today, challenges are recorded on smart phones and uploaded onto the internet for a teen’s entire peer network, and then some, to see. Due to this wide viewing audience and fear of public ridicule, teens often succumb to the pressure to take on these challenges, even if they’d rather not.

While some internet challenges are silly and harmless, many more are dangerous and even deadly. Here are just a few that parents should be aware of:

Fire Challenge: An individual stands in the shower, douses himself in alcohol or other flammable liquid and lights himself on fire, trying to put out the flames before it burns his skin. As you can imagine, this challenge has resulted in severe burns and deaths.

Neknominate (neck + nominate): In this challenge, a person is to quickly drink extreme amounts of alcohol in outlandish ways and then nominate two “friends” to do the same. Multiple accounts of ER visits and alcohol poisoning deaths have been reported, due to this “game.”

Salt and Ice Challenge: Those taking this challenge pour salt onto their arm or other chosen body part, and apply ice for as long as they can stand it. The combination of salt and ice drop temperature levels to far below freezing, which can cause not only third-degree burns, but the need for amputation.

Kylie Jenner challenge: The idea here is to get the voluptuous lips like the TV reality star Kylie Jenner. The person puts a shot glass over her lips then sucks, causing them to swell. While this may not sound horribly dangerous, the results can be terrifying. Many people experience pain and bruising from the suction, and repeated attempts can cause scarring and permanent disfigurement. . What’s worse is that even very young girls are partaking in this challenge.



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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The list of digital dares go on and on. But what they all have in common, besides being senseless, is that they all involve a camera and an upload to the internet. Would you know if your children were taking part in such foolishness? Not necessarily. That is why it is vital to talk with them about the dangers of these 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 along with peer pressure and the competitive desire to one-up a peer, are all power 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 lighting yourself on fire seems quite obviously NOT okay, make no assumptions when it comes to your child's safety.
- **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.

It would be naive 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: McAfee Blog Central: Digital Dares: Dumb Kids with Smart Phones, Sept. 2014. New York Daily News: Viral 'neknominate' drinking game linked to five deaths, Feb. 2014. TWCN Tech News: Dangerous dares start making rounds on the Internet, Oct. 2014. uKnowKids.com: YouTube Challenges and Peer Pressure, Dec. 2014.