



Written by [Elanor Bonta](#) on May 31, 2023

## The Benadryl Challenge: Death in Exchange for Hallucinations

TikTok is known for harmful and deadly challenges to keep kids occupied. In 2020, the craze was the “Benadryl Challenge.”

The Benadryl Challenge was a trend that encouraged the ingestion of far too many pills of Benadryl — or any over-the-counter drug that contained diphenhydramine (DHP). Its origins were muddled, according to [Pop Sugar](#), but can be sourced from May of that year.

The challenge was appealing because consuming enough of DHP can supposedly induce hallucinations, according to [Drug Free](#).



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The challenge urged participants to take up to 12 tablets at once, which is twice what is allowed for children under 12 in the span of 24 hours. And adults over 12 should only take up to 12 over the span of 24 hours. DPH in high dosages can be life-threatening and has been used for self-harm — and those self-harm rates have experienced a steep increase since 2011, according to [Contemporary Pediatrics](#). Treatment of DPH toxins is possible, even though it can cause nausea, seizures, and death.

Overdosing on DPH has the following effects, according to [HealthU](#): sleepiness, constipation, hallucinations, seizures, psychosis, coma, et cetera. So, yes, hallucinations can be induced when overdosing on Benadryl, which is the appeal.

A case study on a teenage girl who had a seizure due to a Benadryl overdose was conducted and published on [Science Direct](#). There was a discussion about seeking a “sense of belonging by participating in the challenge” and emphasized the involvement of caregivers to prevent accidents like that. Being active in a child’s development and engaging in their education could prevent further accidents.

Both Johnson & Johnson, the maker of Benadryl, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued warnings once the death of a 15-year-old girl hit the headlines and shone a light on the deadly trend.

The FDA’s [warning](#) recommended hiding any over-the-counter drugs, removing any posts promoting the trend, and spreading awareness of the dangers of the TikTok challenge. This took place during the time of Covid-19, so keeping Benadryl hidden away while children were constantly at home was crucial.

All those points are true, and the horrors the challenge brought about were disturbing. Among several of the deaths, one was a 13-year-old boy in Ohio. After a consistent six-day overdose consumption of the drug with friends, the boy experienced a seizure.

And according to [the Independent](#), the father “said he was told that his son would never wake up.”

An essential part of the challenge was that it was done among friends. There was a lack of education about the dangers of the trend, and one can only assume that many other instances of uneducated



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social pressures led to these accidents.

Several deaths made the headlines, spooking parents across the continent. TikTok acted by blocking the search for any video with Benadryl mentioned. However, Benadryl and medicines that include dosages of DPH are still over-the-counter and are relatively accessible to children. However, because of the hush-hush over the trend, it has for the most part died down, and no other depressing headlines popped up after its craze in 2020.

It is sad how reliant children have become on the internet for both education and socialization, and with the agglomeration of strangers to interact with online, peer pressure has gone rampant. According to [Scripps Health](#), a pediatrician explained that teens were not mentally developed enough to assess risk to the fullest, which can lead to clouded judgment. Teenagers are also more sensitive to peer pressure due to an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex.

Parents should be aware this, because it can lead to susceptibility to challenges such as overdosing on Benadryl. Especially in the age of the internet, being aware of these dangerous trends can save lives.



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