

Briefing Note: Salt & Ice Challenge – Risks to Children and Young People

**For: Directors of Children's Services and Directors of Public Health
– North East London**

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Background

- The "Salt and Ice Challenge" is an online trend where young people place salt on their skin and press ice on top for as long as possible.
- This creates a chemical reaction, rapidly lowering the temperature and causing cryogenic (cold) burns, similar to frostbite.
- Children and young people may underestimate the harm as the cold numbs the skin, masking pain until significant damage has occurred.

Risks

- Second- or third-degree burns, potential need for skin grafts, lasting scarring, nerve damage, and impact on wellbeing.
- Peer and online pressure amplify the likelihood of wider uptake.

Recent Cases

- ED teams in North East London have already treated children for significant burns linked to this challenge.
- Similar surges have been reported nationally and internationally in the past.

Immediate First Aid Advice

- Cool the affected area under lukewarm running water for at least 10 minutes.
- Do not apply ice, creams, or fluffy dressings.
- Cover with clean cling film or smooth plastic.
- Seek medical attention for deep, blistered, or extensive burns.

Recommended Actions for Schools, Parents and Carers

- Awareness: Alert staff, parents, and carers to the risks of the Salt & Ice Challenge.
- Education: Reinforce with children and young people that this is not a "harmless game" but can cause serious and lasting harm.
- Safeguarding: Be alert to children presenting with unexplained burn injuries and consider safeguarding risks.

Communication suggestions:

- Use assemblies, PSHE lessons, and parent newsletters to share simple prevention messages.

Key Messages for Young People

- “The Salt & Ice Challenge can leave permanent scars—don’t risk it.”
- “Cold burns damage tissue, even if you can’t feel it happening.”
- “Don’t hurt yourself for likes—there are safer ways to have fun online.”

Suggested Next Steps

- Please cascade this briefing across your schools and networks.
- Local safeguarding and health teams can provide further advice if required.

For further information contact:

- Insert local safeguarding contacts

Suggested messaging:

⚠ Parent & Carer Alert: The “Salt & Ice Challenge”

A dangerous online trend is resurfacing where children put salt on their skin and press ice on top.

➡ This causes serious cold burns (like frostbite).

➡ Injuries can need hospital treatment and even skin grafts.

➡ Young people may not realise the damage until it’s too late.

✓ First Aid: Cool with lukewarm running water for 10+ minutes, cover with clean cling film, and seek medical help.

✗ Do NOT use ice, creams, or fluffy dressings.

Message for children & young people:

❖ Hurting yourself for likes isn’t worth it. The scars can last a lifetime.

Suggested Social Media posts:

⚠ The “Salt & Ice Challenge” is NOT harmless. It causes severe cold burns, scarring & sometimes skin grafts. Please talk to children & young people—don’t risk lasting damage for online likes.

Parents & carers: beware the “Salt & Ice Challenge.” ☠ + = serious burns.

✓ Cool under lukewarm water 10+ mins

✓ Cover with cling film

✓ Seek medical help

Don’t let a trend leave permanent scars.

Young people: the “Salt & Ice Challenge” can leave scars for life. ☠ It’s not worth it for likes.

Protect your skin, protect your future. ❤ #StaySafe

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