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Benzocaine products carry risk of blood disorder, FDA warns

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says it continues to receive reports of methemoglobinemia, a serious and potentially fatal adverse effect, associated with benzocaine products both as a spray used during medical procedures to numb the mucous membranes of the mouth and throat, and benzocaine gels and liquids sold over-the-counter and used to relieve pain from a variety of conditions, such as teething, canker sores, and irritation of the mouth and gums.

Methemoglobinemia is a rare but serious condition in which the amount of oxygen carried through the blood stream is greatly reduced. In the most severe cases, methemoglobinemia can result in death. Patients who develop methemoglobinemia may experience signs and symptoms such as pale, gray

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or blue colored skin, lips, and nail beds; headache; lightheadedness; shortness of breath; fatigue; and rapid heart rate.

While methemoglobinemia has been reported with all strengths of benzocaine gels and liquids, most cases occurred in children aged two years or younger who were treated with benzocaine gel for teething. The signs and symptoms usually appear within minutes to hours of applying benzocaine and may occur with the first application of benzocaine or after additional use. The development of methemoglobinemia after treatment with benzocaine sprays may not be related to the amount applied. In many cases, methemoglobinemia was reported following the administration of a single benzocaine spray.

The FDA recommends that Benzocaine products not be used on children under 2 years except under the advice and supervision of a healthcare professional. It also recommends storing these products out of the reach of children.

Source: [Food and Drug Administration](#)

Families interested in learning more about our firm's legal services, including legal representation for children who have suffered serious injuries in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia due to medical malpractice, defective products, birth-related trauma or other injuries, may ask questions or send us information about a particular case by phone or email. There is no charge for contacting us regarding your inquiry. An attorney will respond within 24 hours.

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