

Beware the cinnamon challenge

By ACSH Staff — April 22, 2013

[cinnamon challenge](#)

^[1]It is called the cinnamon challenge a dare popularized by YouTube, in which the hapless victim tries to swallow a spoonful of ground cinnamon in a minute without liquids.

But doctors are now warning that this prank is far from harmless. A [new report](#) ^[2] published in *Pediatrics* says the challenge has led to dozens of calls to poison centers, emergency department visits, and even hospitalizations for adolescents requiring ventilator support for collapsed lungs.

While cinnamon-flavored cereals and toast are benign, trying to swallow a large quantity of dry cinnamon carries a real risk of aspiration (breathing a substance into the lungs rather than the stomach), which can cause lesions, scarring and even pneumonia, warns Dr. Steven Lipschultz of the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine and colleagues.

Poison control centers reported 122 calls in the first half of 2012 related to the cinnamon challenge, about 30 of which required medical attention, the study reports. Common symptoms included coughing and burning of the mouth, nose and throat. More serious symptoms included extensive coughing, vomiting, nosebleed and chest tightness.

Given that over 51,000 YouTube clips show participants trying the cinnamon challenge, clearly most people make it through okay. But the doctors say while the risks of the challenge are relatively low, they are unnecessary and avoidable.

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Links

[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdM_u5y5m5A

[2] <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2013/04/16/peds.2012-3418.full.pdf+html>