

Health Alert

Caution Required When Using Over-The-Counter Oral Pain Relievers

(NAPSA)—Here's news of how you can protect yourself and your family from a serious but rare condition.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning the public that the use of benzocaine gels and liquids for mouth or gum pain can lead to a rare but serious condition called methemoglobinemia, which causes the amount of oxygen in the bloodstream to be greatly reduced.

These over-the-counter products, in which the main ingredient is benzocaine, are sold under a number of store brands and national brands such as Anbesol, Hurricaine, Orajel, Baby Orajel, and Orabase. Benzocaine is also found in lozenges and sprays used to relieve pain from teething, canker sores and irritated gums.

The rare condition occurred mainly in children aged 2 years or younger who were given benzocaine gel for teething. Symptoms of methemoglobinemia don't always appear but can include pale, gray- or blue-colored skin, lips and nail beds; shortness of breath; fatigue; confusion; headache; light-headedness; and rapid heart rate. These signs usually appear within minutes to hours of applying benzocaine and may occur with the first application of benzocaine or after additional use. If you or your child develops any of these symptoms, see a doctor right away.

Benzocaine-containing products should not be used on children less than 2 years old, unless



Doctors advise parents not to use products containing benzocaine to ease teething pain and suggest a chilled teething ring instead.

a doctor says to, and should be stored out of children's reach.

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers some easy, safe alternatives for treating teething pain:

- Give the child a chilled teething ring.

- Gently rub or massage the child's gums with your finger.

If these methods don't ease the pain, ask your doctor.

Adults who choose to use benzocaine products should follow the label recommendations. If the pain continues, see a doctor.

People who have asthma, bronchitis, emphysema or heart disease, as well as smokers, are at greater risk for complications related to methemoglobinemia.

For more information, go to the FDA website at www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm250024.htm.