**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**

**September 2025**

**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

Information shared by: Dr Giles Armstrong [giles.armstrong@nhs.net](mailto:giles.armstrong@nhs.net) Kath Evans [kath.evans3@nhs.net](mailto:kath.evans3@nhs.net) of Barts Health