

[Print this Page](#)[Close Window](#)**At least four choke to death in Japan on New Year's rice cakes**

Posted on : 2008-01-02 | Author : DPA

News Category : Asia

Tokyo - At least four deaths were recorded through Wednesday in Tokyo from eating a traditional Japanese New Year's treat, sticky rice cakes called mochi, a news report said. The men who choked to death were aged 59 to 83 and another 10 people, all over 50, were taken to hospital because mochi had gotten caught in their throats, the Jiji Press news agency reported.

Although the danger of eating the cakes made from pounded glutinous rice is well-known, they remain popular. The Japanese prepare the rice cakes for the gods to receive good fortune in the New Year. The Japanese believe that by eating the treats, they also assimilate the favour of the gods.

The elderly are usually most at risk, and authorities advise them to eat mochi in small pieces with a lot of liquids. Authorities also warn that the elderly and children should eat them only in the company of other people who could attend to them or fetch help if choking should occur.

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