

National inhalants, poisons awareness week

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National Inhalants, Poisons Awareness Week March 14-20

March 9, 2010 -- They're all over your house. They're in your child's school. In fact, you probably picked some up the last time you went to the grocery store. Educate yourself. Find out about inhalants before your children do.

Most parents are in the dark regarding the popularity and dangers of inhalant use. But children are quickly discovering that common household products are inexpensive to obtain, easy to hide and the easiest way to get high. According to national surveys, inhaling dangerous products is becoming one of the most widespread problems in the country. It is as popular as marijuana with young people. More than a million people used inhalants to get high just last year. By the time a student reaches the 8th grade, one in five will have used inhalants.

What is inhalant use? Inhalant use refers to the intentional breathing of gas or vapors with the purpose of reaching a high. Inhalants are legal, everyday products which have a useful purpose, but can be misused. You're probably familiar with many of these substances -- paint, glue and others. But you probably don't know that there are more than 1,000 products that are very dangerous when inhaled -- things like typewriter correction fluid, air-conditioning refrigerant, felt tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, butane and even cooking spray. See [Products Abused as Inhalants](#) for more details.

Who is at risk? Inhalants are an equal opportunity method of substance abuse. Statistics show that young, white males have the highest usage rates. Hispanic and American Indian populations also show high rates of usage. See [Characteristics of Users](#) and [Signs of an Inhalant User](#) for more details.

What can inhalants do to the body? Nearly all abused products produce effects similar to anesthetics, which slow down the body's function. Varying upon level of dosage, the user can experience slight stimulation, feeling of less inhibition or loss of consciousness. The user can also suffer from **Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome**. *This means the user can die the 1st, 10th or 100th time he or she uses an inhalant.* Other effects include damage to the heart, kidney, brain, liver, bone marrow and other organs. Results similar to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may also occur when inhalants are used during pregnancy.

Inhalants are physically and psychologically addicting and users suffer withdrawal symptoms. See [Damage Inhalants Can Cause to the Body and Brain](#), [Long-Term Effects of Inhalant Usage](#) and [Signs and Symptoms of a Long-Term User](#) for more details.

What can I do if someone I know is huffing and appears in a state of crisis? If someone you know is huffing, the best thing to do is remain calm and seek help. Agitation may cause the huffer to become violent, experience hallucinations or suffer heart dysfunction which can cause **Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome**. Make sure the room is well ventilated and call EMS. If the person is not breathing, administer CPR. Once recovered, seek professional treatment and counseling. See [What To Do If Someone is Huffing](#) for more details.

Can inhalant use be treated? Treatment facilities for inhalant users are rare and difficult to find. Users suffer a high rate of relapse, and require thirty to forty days or more of detoxification. Users suffer withdrawal symptoms which can include hallucinations, nausea, excessive sweating, hand tremors, muscle cramps, headaches, chills and delirium tremens. Follow-up treatment is very important. If you or someone you know is seeking help for inhalant abuse, you can contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at 1-800-269-4237 for information on treatment centers and general information on inhalants. Through a network of nationwide contacts, NIPC can help (**but not guarantee**) finding a center in your area that treats inhalant use.

What should I tell my child or students about inhalants? It is never too early to teach your children about the dangers of inhalants. Don't just say "not my kid." Inhalant use starts as early as elementary school and is considered a gateway to further substance abuse. Parents often remain ignorant of inhalant use or do not educate their children until it is too late. Inhalants are not drugs. They are poisons and toxins and should be discussed as such. There are, however, a few age appropriate guidelines that can be useful when educating your children. See [Tips for Teachers](#) for more details on how much to tell your children or students in the classroom about inhalants.

Inhalants are a diverse group of organic solvents, volatile substances, and propellant gases that are intentionally concentrated and inhaled for their psychoactive effects, which range from an alcohol-like intoxication to hallucinations.

The above information was taken from the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition site and the Army Center for Substance Abuse site. For additional information contact the Army Substance Abuse Prevention office at 245 – 4576.

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