



PREVENTION TALK

INHALANT USE ON THE RISE

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JULIE HOGAN, PH.D. DIRECTOR

By Diane Glass, Prevention Application Management Coordinator
Edited by Kris Gabrielsen, Associate Director

Inhalants are common household products that are among the most popular and deadly substances young people abuse. In a recent survey 6th and 7th grade students report inhalants the third most popular substance of abuse after alcohol and tobacco.¹ Parents and caregivers can arm themselves with information about inhalant use and TALK with their teen(s). Young people must understand the consequences of their choice to experiment and use inhalants. One unintended consequence could be death.

Inhalants fall into three categories:

- Solvents (paint thinner, glues, gasoline)
- Gases (butane lighters, helium, propane)
- Aerosols (hair sprays, whipping cream, spray paint)²

Inhalant abusers use the following methods to get high:

- Sniff or snort fumes from containers
- Spray aerosols directly into the nose or mouth
- “Huff” fumes from an inhalant soaked rag stuffed into the mouth
- Sniff fumes sprayed into a paper or plastic bag²

Inhalants give the user a quick high that lasts only a few minutes, so abusers often inhale repeatedly over several hours, which can cause unconsciousness and even death. Other health hazards linked to inhalant abuse are brain damage, bone marrow damage, hearing loss, suffocation, and heart failure.³

For more information call:

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Early recognition of inhalant abuse is important for parents and caregivers. Signs include chemical odors on the breath or clothes, paint stains on skin or clothes, slurred speech, lack of appetite, lack of concentration, nausea, and disoriented appearance.⁴

Educating young people about the dangers of inhalants is a critical part of the inhalant prevention process.

REMEMBER

1 in 5 young people reports using inhalants by eighth grade.¹

TO THINK ABOUT...

- Young people state they abuse inhalants because they are cheap and available.
- Inhalants are popular substances of abuse with potential tragic outcomes.
- Inhalant abuse crosses all socio-economic boundaries.
- Toxic chemicals can damage parts of the brain that control learning, movement, vision and hearing.³

ACTION STEPS:

- Talk with your teen. Give him or her facts and communicate your expectations.
- Monitor inhalant substances in your home.
- Pass this information to other parents.
- For more information see www.inhalants.org

SOURCES CITED:

- ¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003). National survey on drug use and health. Rockville, MD: Author.
- ² Office of National Drug Control Policy. (2002, October). Facts about inhalants. Rockville, MD: Author.
- ³ Mathias, R. (2002, November). Chronic solvent abusers have more brain abnormalities and cognitive impairments than cocaine abusers. *NIDA Notes*, 17(4), 1-3.
- ⁴ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2001, January). Facts about inhalant abuse. *NIDA Notes*, 15(6), 15.