



a foundation dedicated to
advancing community health and
well-being

What Every Parent Needs To Know About Inhalant Abuse



What Is Inhalant Abuse

- Deliberate inhalation of fumes, vapors, or gases to get high
- Sniffing or Huffing
- High of choice for 6-12 year olds



Inhalant Abuse Starts Early

- 26% (1 in 4) children in 6th grade have used inhalants
- Fourth most abused substances after cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana
- Can lead to later abuse of illegal drugs



Commonly Abused Products

- **Gases**
 - Nitrous oxide, helium, refrigerants, propane
- **Cleaning Agents**
 - Spot remover, degreaser
- **Solvents and Fuels**
 - Butane propane, nail polish remover, paint thinner/remover, correction fluid, permanent markers, gasoline, engine octane boosters



Commonly Abused Products

- **Aerosols**
 - Spray paint, hair spray, air freshener, deodorant, fabric protector, computer keyboard cleaners
- **Adhesives**
 - Model airplane glue, rubber cement, PVC cement
- **Foods**
 - Cooking spray, aerosol whipped cream toppings



How It's Done

- Sniffing from a container, bag (bagging), cans, clothing
- Inhaling from a chemically-soaked rag, open container or balloon (huffing)
- Putting a bag over one's head and huffing

For maximum effect, children inhale deeply and then take several more short breaths



Risky Business

- **Nervous system and brain damage**
- **Sometimes irreversible damage to liver, kidneys, bone marrow**
- **Hearing loss**
- **Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome**
 - Children can die the first time or *any* time
 - Usually associated with cardiac arrest



Be on High Alert

- **Highs are temporary**
- **First clues**
 - Change in behaviors at home and school
 - Drop in grades, loss of interest in favorite activities
 - Change in group of friends or activities
- **Medical signs are often non-specific**
 - Healthcare professionals often baffled by symptoms
 - No quick diagnostic tests available



Other Signs

- **Investigate if your child has:**
 - Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearances
 - Glassy, dazed, or watery eyes and nose
 - Slurred or disoriented speech
 - Physical lack of coordination
 - Nausea and/or loss of appetite
 - Spots and/or sores around the mouth
 - Chemical odor on clothing or breath



Short-Term Effects

- Headache
- Muscle weakness
- Abdominal pain
- Severe mood swings
- Violent behavior
- Slurred speech
- Numbness, tingling in hands and feet
- Visual disturbances
- Fatigue
- Lack of coordination
- Apathy
- Impaired judgment
- Dizziness
- Lethargy
- Stupor
- Loss of consciousness
- Limb spasms



Long-Term Effects

- Weight loss
- Muscle weakness
- Disorientation
- Inattentiveness
- Lack of coordination
- Irritability
- Depression



What To Look For

- Multiple household products without a reason
- Hidden baggies, rags, or empty aerosols
- Whipped topping or other aerosols are always low on propellant
- Child overuses perfumes, body sprays, breath mints to mask odor of solvent-based inhalants



Other Warning Signs

- Paint, other products on face, lips, nose, or fingers
- Fingernails painted with permanent markers or typewriter correction fluid
- Butane lighters or refill cans especially
- Multiple cans or overuse of computer keyboard cleaners



Common Slang Terms

Aimies

Air blast

Bagging

Bolt

Boppers

Bullet

Buzz bomb

Chroming

Climax

Dusting

Glading

Heart-on

Highball

Hippie crack

Honey oil

Laughing Gas

Medusa

Moon Gas

Oz

Pearls

Poor man's pot

Poppers

Quicksilver

Rush

Rush snappers

Shoot the Breeze

Snotballs

Texas shoe shine

Thrust

Tolly

Toncho

Whippets

Whiteout



There Are No Cures

- **Traditional drug treatment facilities do not like to admit inhalant abusers**
 - Failure rate is very high
 - Treatment takes months, possibly years
 - Addiction to inhalants is as strong as that of cocaine



Parental Action Is Important

- **Talk with school personnel**
- **Discuss inhalant abuse with other parents**
 - Address the issue at local PTA- PTO meetings, church, community gatherings
- **Talk to your children about inhalants when you discuss smoking, alcohol, and drug abuse**
 - Start these discussions **early**



For Younger Children

- **Talk about oxygen and how it sustains life**
- **Discuss the purpose of household products**
 - Read product labels together
 - Make sure children know that some household and garage items are not safe to breathe
 - Ventilate all areas
- **Educate your child by setting a good example**



For Older Children

- **Tell your children you love them**
 - Their health and safety is your #1 priority
- **Ask if they know about inhalant abuse**
- **Reinforce peer resistance skills**
- **Tell them about the consequences**
- **Monitor your teen's activities**
 - Set boundaries, ask questions, be firm, know their friends, friends' parents, and where they hang out
- **Educate your teen about the dangers - but *do not* mention specific products**



Treatment Options Are Limited

- Treatment is more complicated
 - Requires more time and resources
 - Most treatment facilities are not equipped to handle complexity of abusers' needs
- Resource materials available online at www.inhalant.org

Our Goal: To help educate parents about inhalant abuse so that they can discuss this dangerous behavior when they discuss smoking, alcohol, or illegal drug use with their children



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PLEASE TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN SOON