



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”
- More than 1,400 household products
- 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 chemical-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 and 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 appearance
 - 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

- Having multiple household products without a reason
- Hidden baggies, rags, or empty aerosols in unusual places
- 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
- Constant smelling of clothing, markers, rags
- Butane lighters (empty or partially filled) or refill cans especially if student doesn't smoke
- 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 to 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, and alcohol and drug abuse**
 - Start these discussions **early**



For Younger Children

- **Talk about oxygen and how it sustains life**
- **Play a game: “It is safe to smell or touch?”**
- **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 repeatedly or use recklessly
 - 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**
 - Not the way to “fit in”
- **Tell them about the consequences**
 - Inhalant abuse is dangerous, sometimes deadly
- **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

- Inhalant abusers differ from drug abusers
 - Often have multiple problems
- Treatment is more complicated,
 - Requires more time and resources
 - Most treatment facilities not equipped to handle complexity of abusers' needs
- Resource materials available online at www.inhalant.org



In Emergencies

- **If the child is unconscious or not breathing**
 - Call 911 and administer CPR
- **If conscious, keep child calm and in a well-ventilated area**
- **Do not leave the child alone**
- **Excitement may cause heart dysfunction**
 - Stay calm, do not excite or argue with the child
- **Check for clues, try to identify product abused**
 - Call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 for advice

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!