

What Are Inhalants?

Inhalants are a diverse group of substances that include volatile solvents, gases, and nitrites that are sniffed, snorted, huffed, or bagged to produce intoxicating effects similar to alcohol. These substances are found in common household products like glues, lighter fluid, cleaning fluids, and paint products. Inhalant abuse is the deliberate inhaling or sniffing of these substances to get high. It is estimated that about 1,000 substances are misused in this manner.

How Widespread is Inhalant Abuse?

Easy accessibility, low cost, legal status and ease of transport and concealment make inhalants one of the first substances abused by children. About 15 to 20 percent of junior and senior high school students have tried inhalants with out 2 to 6 percent reporting current use. According to a national survey, between 1994 and 2000, the number of new inhalant users increased more than 50 percent. The highest incidence of use is among 10 to 12 year olds, with rates of use declining with age.

Parents worry about alcohol, tobacco and drug use but may be unaware of the hazards associated with products found throughout their own homes. Knowing what these products are, how they might be harmful, and recognizing the signs and symptoms of their use as inhalants can help a parent prevent abuse of these substances.

What are Some Examples of Inhalants?

Volatile solvents are found in number of everyday products. Some of these products include nail polish remover, lighter fluid, gasoline, pain and paint thinner, rubber glue, waxes, and varnishes.

Chemicals found in these products include toluene, benzene, methanol, methylene chloride, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, methyl butyl ketone, trichloroethylene, and trichlorethane.

The gas used as a propellant in canned whipped cream and in small lavender metallic containers called “whippets” is nitrous oxide or “laughing gas” - the same gas used by dentists for anesthesia. Tiny cloth covered ampules called “poppers” or “snappers” contain amyl nitrite, a medication used to dilate blood vessels. Buyl nitrite, sold as tape head cleaner and referred to as “rush,” “locker room,” or “climax” is often sniffed or huffed to get high.



What are Some Signs and Symptoms of Inhalant Abuse?

Inhalants depress the central nervous system, producing decreased respiration and blood pressure. Users report distortion in perceptions of time and space.

Many users experience headaches, nausea, slurred speech, and loss of motor coordination. Mental effects may include fear, anxiety, or depression.

A rash around the nose and mouth may be seen, and the abuser may start wheezing. An odor of paint or organic solvents on clothes, skin, and breath is sometimes a sign of inhalant abuse. Other indicators include slurred speech, staggering gait, red, glassy or watery eyes, and excitability or unpredictable behavior.

What are the Long Term Effects?

The chronic use of inhalants has been associated with a number of serious health problems. Glue and paint thinner sniffing produce kidney abnormalities while the solvents toluene and trichloroethylene cause liver damage. Memory impairment, attention deficits, and diminished non-verbal intelligence have been related to the abuse of inhalants. Deaths resulting from heart failure, asphyxiation, or aspiration have occurred.



WHERE TO CALL

Laramie County Sheriff's Office



For information on a presentation in a Laramie County School, contact Crime Prevention at 307-633-4751.

For a neighborhood or business drug prevention presentation, contact Crime Prevention at 307-633-4751

To report drug dealing in your area, and remain anonymous call Crime Stoppers Silent Witness at:

307-638-TIPS (8477)

Emergency 9-1-1

Non-Emergency

307-637-6525

www.lcsd.net



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INHALANT ABUSE