

Tips for Teens: Inhalants: The Truth About Inhalants

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Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
1 Choke Cherry Road • Rockville, MD 20857 • 1-877-SAMHSA-7



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Tips for Teens: Inhalants

The Truth About Inhalants

The Truth About Inhalants

Slang—Glue, Kick, Bang, Sniff, Huff, Poppers, Whippets, Texas Shoeshine

Get the Facts...

Inhalants affect your brain. Inhalants are substances or fumes from products such as glue or paint thinner that are sniffed or “huffed” to cause an immediate high. Because they affect your brain with much greater speed and force than many other substances, they can cause irreversible physical and mental damage before you know what’s happened.

Inhalants affect your heart. Inhalants starve the body of oxygen and force the heart to beat irregularly and more rapidly—that can be dangerous for your body.

Inhalants damage other parts of your body. People who use inhalants can experience nausea and nosebleeds; develop liver, lung, and kidney problems; and lose their sense of hearing or smell. Chronic use can lead to muscle wasting and reduced muscle tone and strength.

Inhalants can cause sudden death. Inhalants can kill you instantly. Inhalant users can die by suffocation, choking on their vomit, or having a heart attack.

Before You Risk It...

Get the facts. Inhalants can kill you the very first time you use them.

Stay informed. Inhalants include a large group of chemicals that are found in such household products as aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, glue, paint, paint thinner, gasoline, propane, nail polish remover, correction fluid, and marker pens. None of these are safe to inhale—they all can kill you.

Be aware. Chemicals like amyl nitrite and isobutyl nitrite (“poppers”) and nitrous oxide (“whippets”) are often sold at concerts and dance clubs. They can permanently damage your body and brain.

Know the risks. Chronic inhalant abusers may permanently lose the ability to perform everyday functions like walking, talking, and thinking.

Look around you. The vast majority of teens aren't using inhalants. According to a 2006 study, only 1.3 percent of teens are regular inhalant users and 9 in 10 teens have never even tried inhalants.¹

Know the Signs...

How can you tell if a friend is using inhalants? Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using inhalants:

- Slurred speech
- Drunk, dizzy, or dazed appearance
- Unusual breath odor
- Chemical smell on clothing
- Paint stains on body or face
- Red eyes
- Runny nose

What can you do to help someone who is using inhalants? Be a real friend. Encourage your friend to seek professional help. For information and referrals, call SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727).

For more information or for references to facts found in this *Tips for Teens*, go to www.samhsa.gov/SHIN.

Q & A

Q. Since inhalants are found in household products, aren't they safe?

A. No. Even though household products like glue and air freshener have legal, useful purposes, when they are used as inhalants they are harmful and dangerous. These products are not intended to be inhaled.

Q. Doesn't it take many "huffs" before you're in danger?

A. No. One "huff" can kill you. Or the 10th. Or the 100th. Every huff can be dangerous. Even if you have huffed before without experiencing a problem, there's no way of knowing how the next huff will affect you.

Q. Can inhalants make me lose control?

A. Yes. Inhalants affect your brain and can cause you to suddenly engage in violent, or even deadly, behavior. You could hurt yourself or the people you love.

Info

To learn more about inhalants or obtain referrals to programs in your community, contact one of the following toll-free numbers:

SAMHSA's Health Information Network

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

(English and Spanish)

TTY 1-800-487-4889

The bottom line: If you know someone who uses inhalants, urge him or her to stop or get help. If you're using inhalants—stop! The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life. It's never too late. Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust.

Do it today!

Curious about the TV ads of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign? Check out the Web site at www.freevibe.com or visit the Office of National Drug Control Policy Web site at www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov.