

Inhalant Abuse

Commonly known among kids as “huffing”, “bagging”, or “sniffing,” inhalant abuse is the deliberate concentration and inhalation of common products found in homes, offices, and schools to get high.

Statistics

1998 national surveys of young people and U.S. households indicates that:

- Inhalants are the fourth most-abused substance after alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana among high school students.
- Almost as many 8th graders have abused inhalants (21 percent) as have used marijuana/hashish (22.6 percent).
- Almost half of a million young people use inhalants in any month.
- Nine out of 10 parents refuse to believe their children may have ever abused inhalants.

More than 1,000 common products are potential inhalants that can kill including:

Glues	Markers	Fire extinguishers
Freon	Paint products	Nail polish remover
Correction fluid	Gases (helium, butane, propane)	Lighter fluid
Computer agents	Gasoline	Hair spray
Deodorizers		Cleaning agents

Harmful Effects

Chronic inhalant users can suffer severe and permanent brain damage; some die the first time they experiment. Other possible risks include the following:

- Intoxication
- Hearing loss
- Bone marrow damage
- Short-term memory loss
- Limb spasms
- Liver and kidney damage

Signs of Use

There is a common link between inhalant abuse and problems in school—failing grades, chronic absences, and general apathy. Other signs include the following:

- Paint or stains on body, clothing, rags or bags
- Unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing
- Slurred or disoriented speech
- Anxiety, excitability, irritability, or restlessness
- Missing household items
- Red or runny eyes or nose
- Spots or sores around mouth
- Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearance
- Nausea, loss of appetite

For more information, contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at (800) 269-4237, or visit www.inhalants.org/.

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCDI) offers free information about inhalants that parents and others can share with young people. Contact NCDI at (800) 729-6686 (TDD (800) 487-4889) or www.health.org/.