

Inhalants



What are Inhalants?

Inhalants are ordinary household products that are inhaled or sniffed by children to get high. There are hundreds of household products on the market today that can be misused as inhalants.

What do they look like?

Examples of products kids abuse to get high include model airplane glue, nail polish remover, cleaning fluids, hair spray, gasoline, the propellant in aerosol whipped cream, spray paint, fabric protector, air conditioner fluid (freon), cooking spray and correction fluid.

How are they used?

These products are sniffed, snorted, bagged (fumes inhaled from a plastic bag), or "huffed" (inhalant-soaked rag, sock, or roll of toilet paper in the mouth) to achieve a high. Inhalants are also sniffed directly from the container.

What are their short-term effects?

When inhaled via the nose or mouth into the lungs in sufficient concentrations, inhalants can cause intoxicating effects. Intoxication can last only a few minutes or several hours if inhalants are taken repeatedly. Initially, users may feel slightly stimulated; with successive inhalations, they may feel less inhibited and less in control; finally, a user can lose consciousness. Other effects include headache, muscle weakness, abdominal pain, severe mood swings and violent behavior, numbness and tingling of the hands and feet, nausea, hearing loss, limb spasms, fatigue, and lack of coordination.

What are their long-term effects?

Sniffing highly concentrated amounts of the chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can directly induce heart failure and death. This is especially common from the abuse of fluorocarbons and butane-type gases. High concentrations of inhalants also can cause death from suffocation by displacing oxygen in the lungs and then in the central nervous system so that breathing ceases. Other irreversible effects caused by inhaling specific solvents are hearing loss, limb spasms, central nervous system or brain damage. Serious but potentially reversible effects include liver and kidney damage and blood oxygen depletion. Death from inhalants usually is caused by a very high concentration of fumes. Deliberately inhaling from an attached paper or plastic bag or in a closed area greatly increases the chances of suffocation.

What is their federal classification?

Not Applicable

Source

Partnership for a Drug Free America and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)