

Inhalants: Something Deadly in the Air

The name “inhalants” covers a group of over 2,000 common household products. They include cleaners or strippers, paint thinners, gasoline, glues, markers, paints, aerosol sprays, medical gases, and other specialized chemicals. Some of these chemicals are flammable or explosive. All of them are harmful or deadly if used in the wrong ways. Many inhalants have a strong smell. Some people inhale the vapors on purpose. That’s why they’re called “inhalants.”

When someone inhales a chemical, the linings of the mouth, nose, throat, and lungs quickly soak it up and pass it to the blood. The toxins race to the brain, and begin to affect behavior and sensations. The toxins circulate throughout the body’s organs, doing permanent damage everywhere they go.

Some of the short term effects include; headaches, dizziness, dilated pupils, runny and red nose, nosebleeds, blisters or rash around nose or mouth, a cough that doesn’t go away, slurred speech, sudden mood swings, and tingling in the hands and feet. There are also some long term effects. Inhalants destroy the outer lining of the brain cells, making it impossible for those cells to communicate. Inhalants damage intelligence, memory, problem-solving ability, and the senses of hearing, taste, smell, and sight. Inhalants also cause severe muscle weakness and dramatic changes to a person’s appearance. If someone inhales too much at once or for too long, inhalants cause unconsciousness or death. Dozens of people die each year from inhalant use. It’s called “Sudden Sniffing Death,” and it can happen on the first try.

There are some signs of sniffing or huffing habits, any of the following signs could mean someone is sniffing or huffing inhalants:

- Missed school more than usual
- Red, watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Spots and/or sores around the mouth
- Breath or clothing that smells like chemicals
- Acting drunk, dazed or dizzy
- Marks like paint or ink near the nose or mouth

For more information contact Action for the Betterment of the Community at 347-2991, Drug Free Communities and www.intheknowzone.com