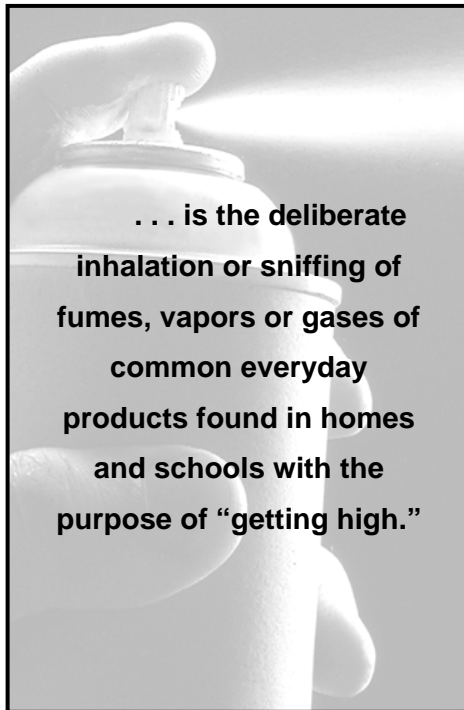


# INHALANT ABUSE



... is the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of fumes, vapors or gases of common everyday products found in homes and schools with the purpose of "getting high."

- Inhalants are often the first drug children may use. Many users say they began sniffing in elementary school.
- Children may start using because they feel these common products can't hurt them, because of peer pressure, or because they are looking for an escape.
- Once a child starts using inhalants regularly, they find it hard to stop.
- The Monitoring the Future study (2006) reports that about one in six American teens have used inhalants to get high by the time they are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Other Resources

The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition  
800-269-4237  
[www.inhalants.org](http://www.inhalants.org)

National Institute on Drug Abuse  
301-443-1124  
[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

The Alliance for Consumer Education  
202-862-3902  
[www.inhalant.org](http://www.inhalant.org)

Partnership for Drug Free America  
212-922-1560  
[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

Local Contact

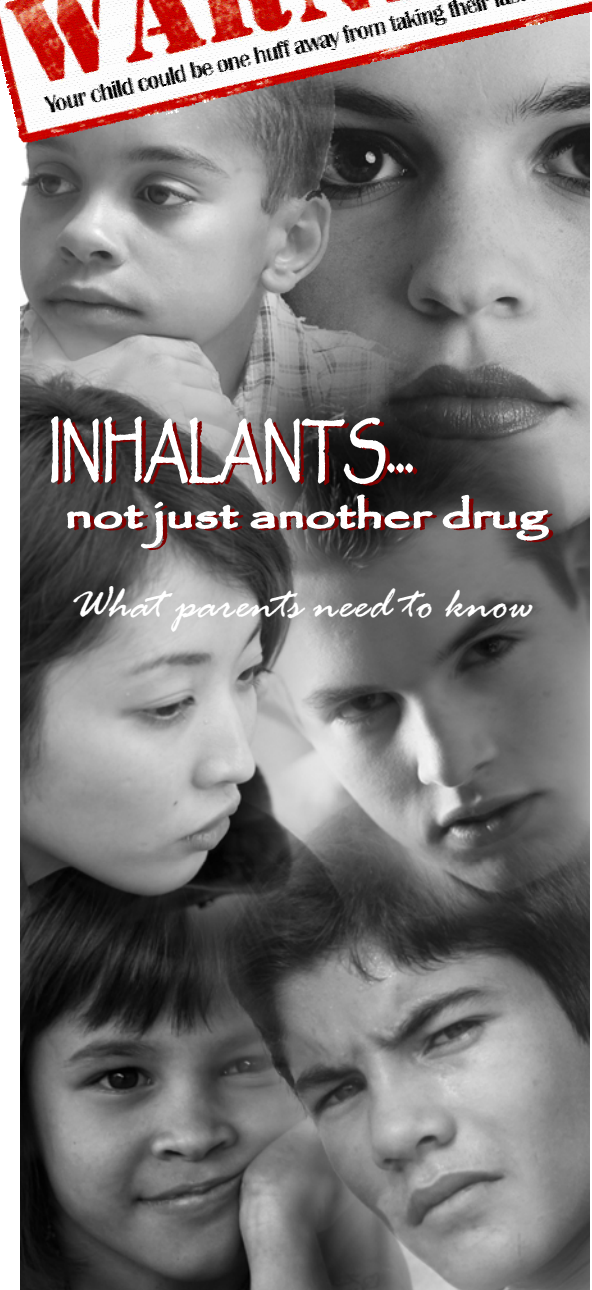
## TRI-ETHNIC CENTER FOR PREVENTION RESEARCH

Toll Free: | Sage Hall  
(800) 835-8091 | Colorado State University  
FAX: (970) 491-0527 | Fort Collins, CO 80523-1879  
[www.TriEthnicCenter.ColoState.edu](http://www.TriEthnicCenter.ColoState.edu)

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**Colorado  
State  
University**

**WARNING**  
Your child could be one huff away from taking their last breath!



**INHALANTS...**  
**not just another drug**

*What parents need to know*

## Effects of Inhalant Use

**Physical symptoms include:** Nausea, forgetfulness, blurred vision, loss of control over movement of arms and legs.

**Internal damage can occur:** Sniffing can severely damage many parts of the body, including the brain, heart, liver and kidneys.

**“Sudden sniffing death”** - sniffing fumes can kill the first time or any time thereafter. The heart begins to beat rapidly but unevenly which can lead to cardiac arrest.

## Other Consequences of Inhalant Use

**Inhalants are addictive** - it takes more and more each time to get high.

**Inhalants can be a “gateway drug”** - children who use inhalants may look for other ways to get high.



## What Products are Abused?

**Many useful, everyday products, when intentionally misused, are poisonous.**

*Products that can be abused include:*

Correction fluid, rubber cement, glue, refrigerants, gasoline, propane, butane, permanent markers, spray paint, nitrous oxide, hair spray, air fresheners, shoe polish and many other volatile substances.

## Know the Warning Signs

**If someone is an inhalant user, some or all of these symptoms may be evident:**

- Drunk, dazed or dizzy appearance
- Slurred or disoriented speech
- Uncoordinated physical movement
- Red or runny eyes and nose
- Spots and/or sores around the mouth
- Unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing
- Signs of paint or other products where they wouldn't normally be, such as on the face, lips, nose or fingers
- Nausea and/or loss of appetite
- Chronic inhalant abusers may have symptoms such as hallucinations, extreme anxiety, excitability, disorientation or belligerence

## Other Behaviors That May Be Observed

- Painting fingernails with permanent markers or correction fluid
- Placing pens or markers by the nose
- Constantly smelling clothing sleeves
- Having paint or stain marks on face, fingers, or clothing
- Having numerous butane lighters/refills in their room, backpack or locker (when the child does not smoke) or having unusual quantities of containers from abusable products in closets, under the bed, in the garage, etc.
- Hiding rags or clothes that have a chemical smell.
- Disappearance of a volatile product at a rapid rate

## What to do in an emergency

*If you find a child unconscious or you suspect a child is under the influence of an inhalant:*

- **Call 911 immediately**
- **Keep the child calm to reduce cardiac stress**
- **Try to determine what product was inhaled so that medical professionals can help more quickly.**

## Tips for Talking to Young Children

One of the most important steps you can take to prevent inhalant abuse is to **talk with your children** or other young persons about not experimenting *even once* with inhalants. **Talk with your children's teachers and other adults** they respect and ask them to communicate the same message.

*Here are some tips to guide the discussion:*

- **Talk about what poisons are** and the effects they can have on a healthy body.
- **Discuss the purpose of products** – explain that when not used properly, some fumes or gases may act like a poison to the body and make you sick.
- **Teach with simple games** – “Is it safe to smell?” – find pictures of various household products and other items and ask your child, “Is this safe?” Identify smells that can harm them.
- **Read product labels with your child** – talk about the way to use products safely.
- **Model appropriate behavior** – open windows or work outdoors when a product says to use with proper ventilation. Talk about and show them that you are careful to use products correctly.

## Tips for Talking to Pre-teens and Teenagers

*Your child may know someone who has tried inhalants even if they themselves have never done so.*

- **Emphasize sniffing or huffing is not harmless** even though the products may be common ones.
- **Ask if they know the physical damage that can occur from sniffing.** You might look for information on the internet or at a library with your child, then read it and discuss it.
- **Tell your child that the consequences from abusing inhalants can be as serious as with other drugs.**
- **Be absolutely clear.** Don't be subtle – tell your child you don't want them to use inhalants because there can be very serious consequences.
- **Communicate with your teen about their activities and those of their friends** – have rules, set boundaries, ask questions about what they do with their friends. Tell them they are loved and you are very concerned about their safety.