

Drug Abuse in the Home: Inhalants

Is Your Child Abusing Inhalants?

Over 600 common products can be used as inhalants. Many are easily available to children, including gasoline, glue, paint, polishes, window cleaners, lighter fluid, correction fluid, felt tip markers and aerosols containing hair spray, deodorant, whipped cream, and air freshener. These everyday household products can be abused as recreational highs for kids with devastating health consequences.

How Do Inhalants Affect The Body?

Inhalants are quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, affecting the brain, lungs, liver and kidneys. The resulting “high” can last anywhere from a few minutes to an hour.

What Is Inhalant Abuse?

Inhalant abuse is the act of sniffing or inhaling a substance in order to experience mind-altering effects. Fumes or vapors may be inhaled (code words: “bagging”, “huffing”) directly from containers, from inside plastic bags placed over the head, or from cloth or clothing saturated with the substance.

Youth at Risk

Inhalants are often the first drug children may use, and can extend into adulthood as a chronic problem. In fact, about 3% of children have tried inhalants by the 4th grade, and 17% of US youth have inhaled solvents with the intent of getting high. In some cases of abuse, sudden death has occurred.

Death can occur when a user breathes too deeply and inhales enough chemical fumes to pass out. This may lead to asphyxiation and/or cardiac arrest. If the user inhales a substance out of a plastic bag, there is danger of death by suffocation. There is also a high rate of suicide and violent death among inhalant abusers.

What's The Law?

In most states, it is illegal to sniff or be high from sniffing. It is also illegal to sell products to a minor for sniffing purposes. Check the laws in your state and inform your child. Inhalant users can be court-ordered to under-go treatment.

RESOURCES

Parents - The Antidrug:

800-662-HELP

www.theantidrug.com

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids:

www.tobaccofreekids.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse - Parenting Resources:

www.drugabuse.gov/parents/

>INFOCUS

A PARENTS GUIDE TO INHALANT ABUSE



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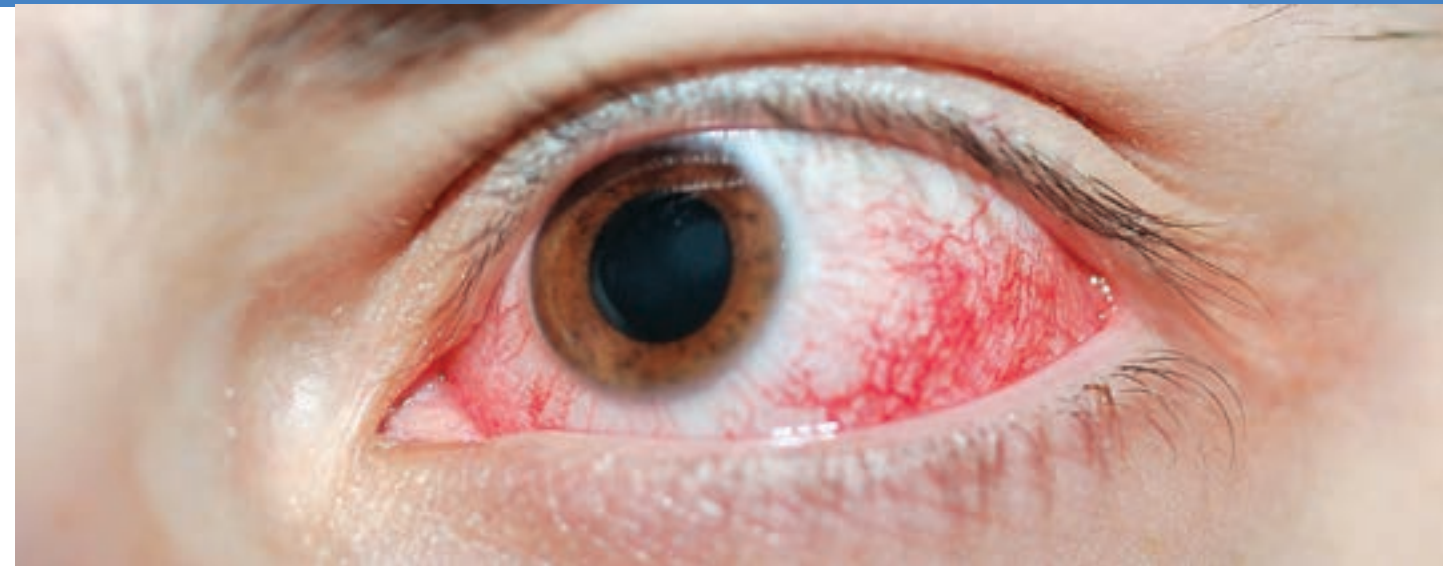
Is Your Child At Risk? IF YOU NOTICE:

Behavioral Symptoms

Mood swings
Personality changes
Defensiveness
Withdrawal from family activities
Change in dress & friends
School problems
Anxious behavior
A tendency to manipulate
Lack of self-discipline

Physical Symptoms

Change in appearance
Fatigue
Bloodshot eyes
Dilated pupils
Frequent colds, coughing
Chronic runny nose
Stumbling, shaky hands
Run-down condition
Sudden weight change
Chemical smell on the breath
Residue around the nose & mouth



How To Fight Back

EDUCATE YOURSELF: Learn the specific ways in which substances are inhaled and how children may conceal their inhalant abuse. Look for unusual amounts of empty aerosol or gas containers which may indicate abuse.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD: Find out how much your child knows. Ask questions, but be careful not to give any "new ideas." Since they are at risk, children need to be aware of the dangers of inhalant abuse in an age-appropriate way. As with any other drug, use of inhalants may be a cry for help. If you suspect your child is using drugs, get professional help immediately.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN: Encourage your child to talk openly with you about problems, feelings, school and friends. Then make the time to talk on an ongoing basis.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO PRACTICE "REFUSAL SKILLS": The offer of inhalants usually comes from a friend or an older child, so along with saying "No", your child needs a list of positive alternatives and activities. Talk with your child and make a list of other options.

"Early inhalant use is clearly an indicator of high risk for multiple problems with school and other drugs."

*Bob Dickinson
Texas Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse*



Your Child May Be Using Inhalants.

WARNING

Short-Term Effects:

Nausea/Dizziness
Sneezing/Coughing/Nosebleeds
Lack of coordination
Slurred speech
Impaired judgement
Rapid pulse/Irregular heartbeat
Blurred vision
Severe headaches
Acute poisoning
Depression
Aggression/Hostility
Hallucinations
Paranoia

Long-Term Effects:

Hepatitis
Brain damage
Bone marrow damage
Liver damage
Kidney damage/Renal failure
Hearing & Visual impairment
Violent assault, including murder
Sudden death (heart failure)
Ongoing hallucinations
Lowered I.Q.