



## WHAT ARE INHALANTS?

Inhalants are substances that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce a mind-altering effect. While there are other drugs that can be inhaled, the term “inhalants” is used for chemicals that are rarely (if ever) used any other way. This includes a broad range of chemicals found in hundreds of ordinary products, many of which can be found around the house (such as cleaning products or aerosol sprays). When used improperly, these chemicals are poisonous and can cause harm to the body.

*Inhalants generally fall into one of four categories:*

- **Volatile solvents**, like paint thinners, gasoline and certain glues
- **Aerosols**, like spray paints, deodorants and hair sprays
- **Gases**, like nitrous oxide (laughing gas), butane lighters and propane
- **Nitrites**, (room deodorizers, leather polish) most notably called “poppers”

## SCENT OF DEATH

Most people who try inhalants think they're harmless. In fact, inhalants do damage to the body that can't be

reversed. People who abuse them can have permanent brain damage and do long-lasting harm to their health.

If someone inhales too much at once or for too long, inhalants can cause unconsciousness or death. Many people have died from a condition known as “Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome,” in which the toxins in the inhalants cause abrupt heart failure. This doesn't just impact long-time users or those in poor health. Absolutely anyone can be affected. It doesn't matter if they're using an inhalant for the first, tenth, or hundredth time.



## INHALANT ABUSE NUMBERS

Inhalants are the fourth-most abused substance in the U.S., right behind alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Approximately 23 million Americans will try them at some point in their lives. While many of these users will die from Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, other deaths caused by the chemicals' side effects are harder to determine. Statistics show that:

- Every year, almost 4,000 emergency room visits in the U.S. have to do with inhalant abuse.
- Around 450 Americans are hospitalized each year due to inhalant poisonings.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### National Institute on Drug Abuse:

[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/inhalants](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/inhalants)

### Foundation for a Drug-Free World:

[www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/inhalants.html](http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/inhalants.html)

# INHALANTS

## TOXINS IN THE AIR



**in the know**

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## INHALANTS IN THE BODY

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 travel throughout the body, doing permanent damage wherever they go. Once in the brain, they begin to affect behavior and sensations. Inhalants have also been known to cause asphyxiation by preventing the lungs from getting enough oxygen to the body.

## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Not all inhalants produce the exact same effects, but in general, the majority cause the user to experience any number of the following:

- *An intoxicated feeling*
- *Slurred speech*
- *Lack of coordination*
- *Apathy*
- *Extreme happiness or giddiness*
- *Dizziness*
- *Stupor*
- *Hallucinations*
- *Convulsions or seizures (can result in death)*
- *Delusions*

- *Coma*
- *Unconsciousness*
- *Temporary hearing loss*
- *Loss of inhibition and control*
- *Drowsiness*
- *Headaches*
- *Severe mood swings*
- *Violent behavior and belligerence*
- *Nausea*



## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

With continued use, inhalants can cause chemicals to build up in the brain and organs. This can cause serious long-term effects like:

- *Damage to nerve fibers*
- *Muscle spasms and tremors*
- *Trouble with walking, bending, and talking*
- *Effects similar to multiple sclerosis disease*

- *Damage to brain cells*
- *Lack of oxygen to the brain (hypoxia)*
- *Memory problems*
- *Convulsions or seizures (can result in death)*
- *Coma*
- *Difficulty learning new things*
- *Loss of sense of smell*
- *Slow and clumsy movements*
- *Depression and irritability*
- *Loss of brain tissue*
- *Impaired thinking*
- *Loss of coordination*
- *Hearing and vision loss*

## SPOTTING THE SIGNS

Any of the following signs could mean someone is abusing inhalants:

- *Red, watery eyes*
- *Rash around the nose and mouth*
- *Glassy eyes*
- *Lack of coordination*
- *Poor personal hygiene*
- *Smell of chemicals around them*



## ADDICTION AND WITHDRAWAL

While it is possible to become addicted to inhalants, this is usually a mental addiction rather than a physical one. Still, when users stop using inhalants, they can often experience different types of withdrawal symptoms. Mental withdrawal symptoms primarily include hallucinations and delusions. Physical withdrawal symptoms include:

- *Hand tremors*
- *Agitation*
- *Seizures*
- *Insomnia*
- *Rapid pulse*
- *Sweating*
- *Nausea*
- *Vomiting*

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Abusing inhalants is harmful and can have major impacts on your body and health. The best way to avoid brain and organ damage is to only use these chemicals for their intended purposes.

Many people have died from a condition known as **“Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome,”** which is where the toxins in the inhalants cause abrupt **HEART FAILURE.**