

INHALANTS

Other names:

Nitrous oxide, laughing gas, whippets, aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, solvents

How it is used:

vapors are inhaled

What it looks like:

nitrous oxide comes in a metal cylinder, sold in a balloon or whipped cream aerosol spray can

Other inhalants include common household products like spray paint, gas, correction fluid, paint thinner, and glue

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 which can be misused as inhalants. Inhalants are frequently abused; more than one in five 8th graders has used inhalants (Monitoring the Future, 2002).

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. 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 it Does: Like anesthesia, inhalants slow down the body's functions. The user may feel stimulated, disoriented, out-of-control, giddy, light-headed, and even display violent behavior. Inhalant abuse can cause severe damage to the brain and nervous system, leading to impaired mental and physical functioning. Because inhalants can starve the body of oxygen, they can lead to unconsciousness and death, commonly referred to as sudden sniffing death (SSD), even if used only once. Some kids use inhalants by spraying the substance into a plastic bag, paper bag, or balloon and holding the bag over their nose and mouth, putting them at risk of suffocation.

A heavy user of inhalants may find that he or she needs more and more to get high. These heavy users are most at risk for brain damage.

Effects on the mind and body:

- headache, muscle weakness, abdominal pain
- severe mood swings and violent behavior
- numbness and tingling of the hands and feet
- decrease or loss of sense of smell
- liver, lung, and kidney damage
- dangerous chemical imbalances in the body
- hepatitis or brain damage from long-term use
- permanent damage to the nervous system
- hepatitis or brain damage from long-term use
- nausea
- nosebleeds
- brain damage
- weight loss
- loss of appetite
- death
- coma
- fatigue, lack of coordination
- decrease in heart and respiratory rates

Support Groups in Lancaster County:

Alcoholics Anonymous (717) 394-3238
Narcotics Anonymous (717) 393-4546
Al-Anon (for family & friends) (877) 298-5027