

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Inhalant Abuse?

- Inhalant Abuse is the deliberate inhalation by “sniffing” or “huffing” fumes, vapors, or gases from common household and commercial products for the purpose of “getting high.”

How prevalent is Inhalant Abuse in the United States?

- Over 2.6 million children, aged 12 – 17, use an Inhalant each year to get high.
- 1 in 4 students in America has intentionally abused a common household product to get high by the time they reach the eighth grade.
- Inhalants tend to be the drug that is tried first by children.
- “Sniffing” and “huffing” can begin at age 10 or younger.
- 59% of children are aware of friends huffing at age 12.
- Inhalants are the fourth most-abused substance after alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.
- The number of lives claimed by Inhalant Abuse each year is unknown because these deaths often are attributed to other causes.

What kinds of products are abused by young people?

- More than 1,400 common household and commercial products are used for the purpose of “getting high.”
- Most products used as Inhalants are inexpensive, legal, and readily available in the home, garage, office, school, or in the local convenience store.
- Products include: computer cleaner, air conditioning coolant, gasoline, felt tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, butane, cooking spray, paint, glue, and hundreds more.

What can happen to children who abuse Inhalants?

- Children can die anytime they abuse an Inhalant — including the first time — through Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, suffocation, choking, or a fatal injury.
- Inhalant Abuse can damage the brain and other vital organs, such as the heart, kidneys and liver, causing brain damage or other severe physical impairments.
- Inhalants can be addictive and children may progress to illegal drugs or alcohol abuse.

What can parents do if they suspect that their children are abusing Inhalants?

- **Seek professional advice!** Call your family physician, a school nurse, counselor, or the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222).
- Start young and talk to your children about the safe and proper use of household products and the dangers of Inhalant Abuse.
- Parenting requires good communication skills. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions.
- Ask where your children are going and with whom. Get to know their friends.
- Know what they are doing after school hours (3:00pm - 6:00pm are critical hours). Monitor activities and don't be afraid to set firm boundaries.



ABOUT US

The Alliance for Consumer Education (ACE) was founded in 2000 by a group of nonprofit organizations and household product manufacturers.

- The ACE mission is “to promote responsible and beneficial use of products to ensure a safer, healthier, and cleaner environment in homes, businesses, and the community.”
- ACE core program areas are:
 - **Inhalant Abuse Prevention**
 - **Disease Prevention**
 - **Poison Prevention**
 - **Product Management**
- ACE is an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a volunteer Board of Trustees.

INHALANT ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

ACE launched the Inhalant Abuse Prevention Program on March 20, 2002, in Washington, DC. The program is designed to provide parents with high quality and practical information about Inhalant Abuse so they can include it in substance abuse discussions with their children.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Studies by the Office of National Drug Control Policy found that “if you talk to your kids about the risks of drugs, it is 50% less likely they will abuse an Inhalant.” But, unfortunately, not enough parents are talking to children about this deadly issue. Many parents do not know about it or just do not realize their child may be using Inhalants to get high.

According to research by the Alliance for Consumer Education, only 47% of parents know enough about Inhalant Abuse to talk with their children about it — 50% less than those who will talk about alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America reports that at the same time that 1 in 4 eighth graders had admittedly used Inhalants, 9 out of 10 of their parents were unaware, or denied, that their children had abused Inhalants.

Take a few minutes to educate yourself about Inhalant Abuse. Learn the behavior patterns and warning signs to watch for so you can talk to your children about Inhalant Abuse. **Parents can have a tremendous impact on their kids' choices!**

1 Include Inhalant Abuse in substance abuse discussions with your child:

First, parents should arm themselves with as much information about Inhalant Abuse as possible.

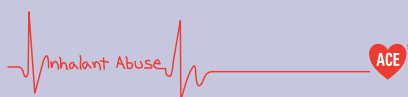
- Know what products are potentially harmful if intentionally abused as Inhalants.
- Learn what slang words are used to describe Inhalants and the act of Inhaling, such as: huffing, bagging, poppers, etc.
- Go to the various web sites and read as much information as possible. You will find a list of valuable resource sites at www.inhalant.org, the ACE web site dedicated to information that will help reduce Inhalant Abuse.
- Ask your pediatrician to tell you about Inhalant Abuse and ask if he or she has had any experience dealing with children that have abused Inhalants.

One of the most important steps you can take is to talk with your children about Inhalants at an appropriate but early age. In addition, talk with your children's friends, teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, and parents of other children. By discussing this problem openly and stressing the serious and potentially fatal consequences of Inhalant Abuse, you may help save a life.

2 Know the warning signs:

If someone is an Inhalant Abuser, some or all of these symptoms may be evident:

- Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearance
- Glassy, glazed, or watery eyes



- Slurred or disoriented speech
- Uncoordinated movements
- Red or runny eyes and nose
- Spots and/or sores around the mouth
- Unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing
- Nausea and/or loss of appetite
- Behavioral/mood changes
- Chronic Inhalant Abusers may exhibit symptoms such as hallucinations, anxiety, excitability, irritability, restlessness, or anger.



Parents or school staff might not see all of these warning signs in all children, as the effects of Inhalant Abuse can wear off quickly. Several of the signs point to occasional problems most youth experience at some point during their teenage years, but don't be fooled. Know the warning signs that may signal real trouble for your child.

3 Recognize other telltale signs of Inhalant Abusers:

- Painting fingernails with magic markers or correction fluid
- Sitting with a pen or marker held close to the nose
- Constantly smelling sleeves or other parts of clothing
- Trying to hide paint or stain marks on face, lips, nose, fingers or clothing
- Having numerous butane lighters and refills, gasoline or paint-soaked rags, or used spray paint cans in child's room, backpack, or locker
- Hiding rags, plastic sandwich bags, clothes or empty containers of the potentially abused products in closets, under the bed, or in the garage.

4 Know what to do in case of an emergency:

- First, **stay calm**, do not excite or argue with an individual who is under the influence.
- If the person is unconscious or not breathing — **call 911 or other emergency help immediately**. CPR should be administered until help arrives.
- If the person is conscious, keep him/her calm and in a well-ventilated area.
- **Do not leave the person alone.**
- Activity, excitement, or stress may cause heart problems or lead to "Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome" (when an individual suddenly dies from cardiac arrest immediately after using an Inhalant).
- Check for clues, such as a rag, empty aerosol container, etc., to **try to find out what product was used** as the Inhalant. Tell the proper authorities.
- **Seek professional help** for the abuser through a counselor, school nurse, physician, teacher, clergy, or coach.
- **Be a good listener.**

IF YOU FIND YOUR CHILD UNCONSCIOUS OR YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AN INHALANT, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.

If you suspect your child might be abusing Inhalants, call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222, or call the "1-800" number on the label of the product you suspect your child is using. Discuss the topic with your pediatrician, family practice doctor, or a substance abuse counselor.



Tips for Talking to your Kids (6-11 year olds)

- Discuss what fumes and vapors are and what effects they can have on a healthy body. *Poison* and *oxygen* can be hard words for young children to understand, so you may have to explain what a poison is and how important oxygen is for a healthy body and brain.
- Play a game, “Is it safe to smell or touch?” Find pictures of various household products and ask your child, “Is this safe to smell or touch...and why?”
- Discuss the purpose of common household products and emphasize that, when not used properly, certain fumes or gases could harm the body. Keep all dangerous chemicals out of young children’s reach.
- Suggest opening windows or using fans when products call for proper ventilation.
- When your child helps clean, be a good role model and read product labels together, talk about the directions, and answer any questions your child may have. Always supervise your child’s use of household products, where the label allows such use. And, importantly, teach by example. Show your child that you use household products responsibly and according to the directions.
- Reinforce age-appropriate peer resistance skills. “If someone asks you to try something, come ask me because I care about keeping you safe.”
- Educate your child about the dangers; however, be careful about educating your child about specific products being used as Inhalants. Don’t mention specific substances unless your child brings them up. While many youngsters know kids are sniffing some substances, they may not know the full range of products that can be abused and you don’t want to give them suggestions.

Tips for Talking to your Teens (12-18 year olds)

- Ask your teenager if he/she knows about Inhalant Abuse; has he/she seen other kids abusing products?
- Reinforce peer resistance skills. Tell them that sniffing products to get high is not the way to fit in. Inhalants are not harmless; the high comes with an even higher cost.
- Encourage your child to come to you if he/she has any questions about Inhalants.
- Ask if he/she knows the physical damages that can occur from “sniffing” (damage to brain, liver, lungs, and kidneys; loss of memory and smell; death — even the first time).
- Tell your child that the consequences of abusing products are serious.
- Be absolutely clear — emphasize that unsafe actions and risky behavior have serious consequences.
- Monitor your teen’s activities — set boundaries, ask questions about his/her friends and check with the friend’s parents.
- Tell them that you love them and that their safety is your number one priority. Tell them again...and again...and again.

