



The Facts about Inhalant Abuse

What is inhalant abuse?

Inhalant abuse is the intentional breathing of vapors or fumes for the purpose of getting high. Substances containing inhalants are legal, everyday products that have useful purposes, but can be misused. There are more than 1,000 products that are potentially dangerous inhalants, including paint, glue, typewriter correction fluid, air-conditioning refrigerant, felt-tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, lighter fluid and cooking spray. Misuse of these products can include sniffing them from the container (*"sniffing"*), inhaling them from a soaked cloth (*"huffing"*), or inhaling them from a bag (*"bagging"*).



Who is at risk for inhalant abuse?

According to a recent survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, inhalant abuse among students in all grades has risen steadily since 1991. Almost 20 percent of all adolescents report using inhalants at least once in their lives. Current reported use is highest among eighth graders.

What are the possible effects of inhalant abuse?

Inhalant abusers can also suffer from **Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome**. *This means that a person can die after even the single misuse of an inhalant.* Other potential risks include:

- Heart palpitations, abnormal heart rhythms
- Coma, seizures, headache, dizziness
- Muscle weakness, loss of motor coordination
- Abdominal pain, nausea
- Nosebleeds, decreased sense of smell
- Breathing difficulty, wheezing
- Permanent damage to the heart, kidney, brain, liver, bone marrow and other organs



Inhalants are physically and psychologically addicting, and inhalant abusers can suffer withdrawal symptoms with discontinuation of use.

How can inhalant abuse be recognized?

Parents, educators, coaches, counselors and health care professionals should be alert to the following signs of a serious inhalant abuse problem:

- Chemical odors on breath or clothing
- Paint or other stains on face, hands or clothes
- Hidden, empty spray paint or solvent containers and chemical-soaked rags or clothing
- Drunkenness or disoriented appearance
- Slurred speech
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Inattentiveness, lack of coordination, irritability and depression

Inhalant Abuse

Prevention Tips and Treatment Information

What can you do to prevent inhalant abuse?

Awareness is key to helping prevent inhalant abuse. However, if someone is already abusing inhalants, early identification and intervention are the best ways to stop inhalant abuse before it causes serious health consequences.

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) offers the following suggestions to help parents prevent inhalant abuse:



1. Talk with your children about the dangers of inhalant abuse and discourage them from experimenting with such products.
2. Speak with your children's teachers, guidance counselors and coaches.
3. Openly discuss the devastating consequences of inhalant abuse, even after just one use.
4. If you suspect your child or someone you know is abusing inhalants, consider seeking professional help. Contact your primary care physician, a local drug rehabilitation center or other services available in your community.

If you believe your child is using inhalants and is experiencing any of the symptoms such as those described on the reverse side of this page, contact the IPC immediately to obtain confidential treatment recommendations.

What is the IPC?

The IPC is the only certified, regional poison center in the state, serving all of Illinois 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Staffed by physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other poison specialists, the IPC provides confidential poison prevention advice and treatment recommendations to the public and health care professionals via a national, toll-free hot line: 1-800-222-1222. The IPC answers calls on household products, alcohol or drug abuse, herbal products, medication overdoses, adverse reactions to medications, venomous bites and other poisonings.

Other inhalant abuse resources

American Council for Drug Education	1-800-488-DRUG
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	1-800-622-2255
National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information	1-800-729-6686
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment Information and Treatment Referral Hotline	1-800-622-HELP
National Inhalant Prevention Coalition	1-800-269-4237



The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association of more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services.