Inhalants

It's been used by more teens than any other illegal drug except marijuana. It can kill the first time it’s used. One out of every five teens in America has used inhalants to get high — and inhalant abuse can begin at a very young age.

What are they ? 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 that can be misused as inhalants.

What do they look like ?Examples of products youth 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.How are they used ? 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.

Who Uses InhalantsNational surveys indicate that inhalant abuse is particulaly prevalent among young people. Some young people may abuse inhalants as a substitute for alcohol because they can be obtained easily. Data suggest that abuse reaches its peak at some point during the seventh through ninth grades.3 Eigth-graders regularly report the highest rates of abuse. In fact, data for 2004 shows a significant increase in lifetime inhalant use among eigth-graders.4

Short Term EffectsWhen inhaled via the nose or mouth into the lungs in sufficient concentrations, inhalants can cause intoxicating effects. Intoxication can last a few minutes or several hours if inhalants are taken repeatedly. Initially, users may feel slightly stimulated; with successive inhalations, they may feel less inhibited and less in control; finally, a user can lose consciousness. Other effects include headache, muscle weakness, abdominal pain, severe mood swings and violent behavior, numbness and tingling of the hands and feet, nausea, hearing loss, limb spasms, fatigue, and lack of coordination. Long Term EffectsInhalants can directly induce heart failure and death. This is especially common from the abuse of fluorocarbons and butane-type gases. High concentrations of inhalants can also cause death from suffocation — by displacing oxygen in the lungs and then in the central nervous system so that breathing ceases. Other irreversible effects caused by inhaling specific solvents are hearing loss, limb spasms, and central nervous system or brain damage. Serious but potentially reversible effects include liver and kidney damage and blood oxygen depletion. Death from inhalants is usually caused by a very high concentration of fumes. Deliberately inhaling from an attached paper or plastic bag or in a closed area greatly increases the chances of suffocation. Sources1 In the Know Zone

2 US Dept. of Health & Human Services

3 National Institute On Drug Abuse

4 Monitoring the Future Survey