



Inhalant Abuse

Know the Facts

Inhalant abuse is inhaling something to get high. Inhalant highs are the result of toxic chemicals getting into the brain tissue, where they cause permanent damage. Because the chemicals in inhalants enter the lungs in such high levels, and go directly to the brain (replacing oxygen) they are more dangerous than other types of abused drugs. There are at least 1000 common household products and school supplies being misused as inhalants.

What happens when you use inhalants?



- Short-term memory loss.
- Hearing loss.
- Limb spasms.
- Death. Sometimes when used the first time.
- **Severe and permanent brain damage.**
- May pass out or loss consciousness.
- Permanent damage to the liver, kidneys, and bone marrow.
- Long-time users may experience chromosome damage.
- Bone marrow damage.
- Possible fetal effects similar to fetal alcohol syndrome.



What are common signs of abuse?

- Paint stains on body, clothing, rags or bags.
- Spots or sores around the mouth. Nose is runny or eyes are red.
- Breath has a chemical odor.
- Person has drunk, dazed or dizzy appearance.
- Person has nausea or loss of appetite.
- Person is anxious, irritable or excitable.
- Missing household, school, commercial items that are known as being abused.
- There is a common link between inhalant abuse and problems in school – failing grades, chronic absences and general lack of interest.



What to do if you walk in on someone inhaling?

- Remain calm and do not panic.
- DO NOT excite or argue with the abuser when they are under the influence.
- If person is unconscious or not breathing – call for help.
- Do not leave the person alone.
- Talk with others present or check the area for clues as to what was used.
- Call the Oklahoma Poison Control Center.
- Once recovered, seek professional help for the abuser from a school nurse, counselor, physician, or health care worker.



Other Resources

- The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition – 1-800-269-4237 or www.inhalants.org
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse – 1-888-NIH-NIDA - 1-888-889-6432 or www.drugabuse.gov/

Oklahoma Poison Control Center
1-800-222-1222, OKC Area (405) 271-5454
www.oklahomapoison.org