

# Poison Facts:

## Inhalant Abuse

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### Who is at risk for inhalant abuse?

- By eighth grade, one in five young people has used an inhalant to get “high,” risking brain damage and death.
- Young people can get high on more than a thousand useful and completely legal products.

### What are inhalants?

Inhalants are chemicals that cause a person to feel high after inhaling or breathing them in. They are found in these common household products and many others:

Cooking spray	Solvents
Whipped cream propellant	Butane
Correction fluid	Gasoline
Hair spray	Kerosene
Nail preparation	Lighter fluid
Aerosol sprays	Refrigerants
Felt tip markers	Turpentine
Glues/adhesives	Spot and stain removers
Mineral spirits	Copper pipe cleaner
Paint and spray paint	
Paint thinners	

### Why do people, especially young people, use inhalants?

- They get a temporary high.
- They feel pressure from their peers.
- Inhalants are cheap and easy to get.

### How do they use these products?

- **Huffing:** Breathing in fumes from a cloth soaked in a chemical.
- **Sniffing:** Breathing in fumes from an open container or filling a closet or car with vapors.
- **Bagging:** Placing the substance in a plastic bag and holding it over the mouth and nose.
- **Spraying:** Putting a substance directly into the mouth.

### What are the signs of inhalant abuse?

- Red eyes and/or runny nose.
- Red areas or sores around the mouth.
- Unusual chemical breath odor.
- Drunk, dazed or dizzy appearance.
- Anxiety, excitability, irritability.
- Disappearance of household products.
- Chemical-soaked rags, socks or bags.

### **What kind of damage can inhalants cause?**

- Permanent damage to the nervous system, lungs, kidneys and other organs. Brain scans have shown “holes” in the brains of chronic users of inhalants, resulting in permanent brain damage.
- Danger to unborn children when used by pregnant women.
- Poor judgment, poor grades and poor appetite.
- Impaired vision, slurred speech and short-term memory loss.
- Loss of motor skills and coordination.
- Physical and psychological addiction. Users suffer withdrawal symptoms.
- Coma.
- Death, even with a one-time use. Mixing inhalants with other drugs and alcohol increases the chances of coma or death.

Though most young people believe that they can't die from inhalants, this is not true. A user can suffer from “sudden sniffing death,” which occurs when inhalants disrupt heart rhythms and cardiac arrest results. Death can also result from suffocation or a fatal injury caused by a car accident when driving while high.

### **What can I do as a parent?**

- Talk to your children about the dangers of inhalant abuse.
- Start education at a young age. Inhalant abuse often begins in elementary school.
- Consult a school counselor, physician or drug-counseling center if you suspect inhalant abuse.

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**For more poison prevention and first aid information, call the**

Poison Control Center  
Serving the Residents of Kansas

Toll-free Hotline  
**1-800-222-1222**

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS HOSPITAL  
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