



2735 East 10th Street, CA110
Bloomington, IN 47405
Phone: 1-800-346-3077
Fax: 812-855-4940
E-mail:
drugprc@indiana.edu
www.drugs.indiana.edu

PREVALERT: INHALANTS

By JoBeth McCarthy-Jean, M.P.H. and Jonathan Agle, M.P.H.

Snuffing Out Inhalant Use

Gas or vapors with a child in search of a quick and cheap high is a deadly mix. Inhalant use is termed as “sniffing,” “huffing,” “bagging,” or “ballooning” fumes, vapors, or gases for the intention of achieving a high. Inhalants are cheaper than most drugs and easier to obtain. Gasoline, permanent markers, white out, helium, air freshener, paint thinner, propane, glue, nail polish, and hair spray, are among the collection of everyday household products misused by America’s children. Unfortunately, few of these products contain warning signs that read “**CAUTION: Sudden Death May Occur if Misused.**”

According to the national 2005 *Monitoring the Future* survey, lifetime inhalant use prevalence rates among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students dropped slightly. The 2005 annual *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents* survey revealed that while lifetime use among 8th, 9th, and 10th grades reported higher use rates than grades 11th and 12th, inhalant use among all grades dipped, mirroring the national trend.

What Can Parents Do?

- Who** **Anyone.** The average age is 14, but many children report use as early as age 6. Males and females. Children who would not normally “do drugs” are children at risk of doing inhalants.
- What** **Anything.** Rags, plastic and paper bags, plastic bottles, empty aerosol, room deodorizers, butane, gas and cans are examples of paraphernalia used to achieve a “high.”
- Where** **Anywhere.** Any place can be a potential location for use of inhalants: bedrooms, garages, locker rooms, huffing parties.
- When** **Anytime.** At any hour of the day or night your son or daughter can huff gasoline, sniff glue, bag paint, or suck helium from a balloon.

Prevention: Engage in conversations with your child, they have a lot to say. Open dialogue about the dangers of using inhalants with a current event (newspaper article, local community news, etc.) . Pay attention to behavioral patterns, circle of friends, and activities. Become aware of the signs and symptoms of use.

Signs of Use: Loss of appetite; loss of inhibition; lack of coordination; paint and/or chemical odor and/or staining; withdrawal from family, school or from normal group of friends; a rash around nose and mouth; or disorientation.

Treatment: Withdrawal can include aggressiveness, headaches, muscle cramps, tremors, hallucinations, excessive sweating, and nausea. Treatment can be challenging, but recovery is possible. Contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at 1-800-269-4237 for a referral.

Resources: **Tips for Teens:** <http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov/govpubs/PHD631/>
National Inhalant Prevention Coalition: www.inhalants.org
Factline on Inhalants: www.drugs.indiana.edu



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