

Inhalants

“Inhalants” (also known as “poppers,” gas, or glue) are commercial or household products that contain chemical vapours or gases which can create a feeling of being “high” when inhaled. This type of misuse can be dangerous to one’s health and well-being. Some common household products that are used as inhalants include gasoline, paint thinner, glue, white-out and permanent markers. Children, teens and young adults are at a high risk for misuse because these items are cheap and available at many grocery and convenience stores.

There are 4 types of inhalants:

- **Aerosols** are substances that come in the form of spray cans, hair spray and paint cans. These products are abused by spraying into the nose or are “huffed” from a bag.
- **Nitrites** are often sold in the form of odourizers for rooms. Nitrites are abused by inhaling it from a bottle or cloth.
- **Nitrous oxide** is a gas that is abused by breathing it from aerosol cans and when it’s in balloons. Gases can also come in sealed containers and include chloroform, butane and propane. Nitrous oxide is sometimes referred to as “laughing gas.”
- **Volatile solvents** come in many forms. Two types of volatile solvents are gasoline and cleaning supplies. These products evaporate when they come in contact with the air and are sometimes used to mix with other materials in water.

Short-Term Effects

Inhalants can change the way you feel right after you breathe it in. The “high” you get from inhaling solvents can make you feel disoriented and excited. You might have headaches and feel sleepy from using inhalants. Inhaling nitrous oxide can make it hard to breath. It can also cause you to feel like you are dreaming and could affect the ability to move your body.

Misusing inhalants can result in an addiction. A person may crave the feeling of being “high” which pulls them back to misusing the drug.

Other side effects of inhalants include:

- feeling dizzy and drowsy;
- feeling drunk and slurring your words;
- hallucinating;

- throwing up;
- coughing, sneezing and being unsteady on your feet;
- having reflexes that are slow; and
- your eyes being bothered by light.

Long-Term Effects

Long-term use can result in permanent damage to your body. This might include liver and kidney failure, abnormal heart beat and blood vessel damage. Heavy use of nitrous oxide can harm your body’s nerves and can affect your ability to feel, smell, and see. You also risk having poor balance and coordination, severe and permanent brain damage, and mood swings. Visible signs of long-term inhalant misuse can include: nosebleeds, pale skin, sores on your mouth and nose, bloodshot eyes, weight loss and hearing loss. Regular users of inhalants might develop a tolerance. This means that you feel a need to use a greater amount of the inhalant to receive the same “high,” over time.

Some other risks faced by long-term inhalant users are:

- overdose;
- relationship problems with family and friends;
- problems with school or work; and
- legal issues.

Inhalant misuse can cause permanent damage to one's hearing.

How does it work?

Inhalant users will try household, industrial or medical products that are not meant to be inhaled. Inhalants are carried through the blood to your body fat. The brain, liver and kidneys can be damaged from inhalant misuse. Nitrite based inhalants can cause blood to move quickly to your brain which will give you a "rush." The misuse of inhalants can cause a short-term high lasting about 45 minutes. Misusing inhalants can result in mind-altering effects such as hallucinations, delusions and euphoria.

Inhalants can catch fire easily, with tragic results.

Inhalants and Dependency

Misusing inhalants can result in an addiction. A person might go through withdrawal symptoms after they stop using inhalants for a period of time. You might feel like throwing up, have no desire to eat, experience tremors, anxiety attacks, depression and paranoia, delusions, dilated pupils, or bad mood swings. Wanting to use inhalants could become more important than your work, family, friends and other relationships.

Brain damage from inhalant misuse is usually permanent.

Did you know?

Sniffing nitrous oxide can starve the body of oxygen, which can permanently harm your body and can cause death. "Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome" can happen to a person even if they are healthy and misuse inhalants just once. Misuse can affect your heartbeat which can lead to heart failure and sometimes death.

Using inhalants during pregnancy is not safe. Studies with animals have shown that birth weight can be lowered due to inhalant use during pregnancy. Inhaling chemicals can also reach breast milk and can enter the baby's body during breastfeeding.

Who can you contact if you need help regarding drug use?

Contact your local Addictions/Mental Health Services office, doctor or other health care provider if you need more information. To locate Addictions/Mental Health Services near you here are some options:

- Visit www.saskatchewan.ca/addictions;
- Check the green pages of your phone book for your local health region's services;
- Visit HealthLine Online at healthlineonline.ca; or
- Contact HealthLine at 811 and ask to speak to an Addictions or Mental Health Counsellor.



NOTE: This material is for information only and should not replace advice from an Addictions or Mental Health Counsellor, doctor or other health care provider.

To access fact sheets sources please contact the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health at (306) 787-7239.