

With cold temperatures and snowy weather comes more time spent indoors...which makes now a great time to talk to your children about the dangers of inhalants. While the products inhaled or huffed are often harmless, the risks are real. They're also potentially lethal.

What are inhalants?

Inhalants are chemicals found in certain household and workplace products that produce chemical vapors. Inhaled substances are rapidly absorbed into the brain to produce a quick high with mind-altering effects. The effects can last 15 to 45 minutes. Inhalants are inexpensive, easy to hide, and legal.

More than 1,000 products are used as inhalants, many of them ordinary household goods. Some examples include: nail polish remover; household cleaners; deodorants; cooking spray; glue; rubber cement; paint thinner; butane lighter fluid; shoe polish; spray paint; markers; gasoline; and aerosol whipped cream.

Some slang terms for inhalants are: poppers; snappers; kick; bang; sniff; and whippets.

What does it mean to huff an inhalant?

Huffing is sometimes used as a generic term for any type of inhalant use. But there are various ways to use inhalants, including:

- **Huffing** – an inhalant-soaked rag pressed to the mouth.
- **Sniffing or snorting** - fumes sniffed or snorted directly from an aerosol container or sprayed onto a heated surface and sniffed.
- **Bagging** - fumes sprayed or poured into a plastic or paper bag, which is placed over the mouth, nose or head.
- **Spraying** - aerosol is sprayed directly into the nose or mouth.
- **Inhaling** - piercing cans of whipped cream ("whippets") to release nitrous oxide into a balloon, from which it is inhaled.

What are the risks of using inhalants?

In addition to the initial euphoria, inhaling household products can have side effects ranging from mild (dizziness, headache, skin rash) to severe (loss of coordination, inhibition and control; hostility; apathy; hallucinations and delusions; suffocation; seizures; loss of consciousness; and a rapid, irregular heartbeat that can trigger lethal heart failure).

What are the warning signs of inhalant use?

Inhalant use can be hard to detect. In addition to the side effects listed above, watch for these warning signs:

- Hidden rags, clothes, bags, gauze or empty containers of inhalable products
- Chemical odors on breath or clothing
- Paint or other stains on face, hands or clothing
- Slurred or incoherent speech
- Appearing drunk or dazed
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- A rash around the mouth that extends to the middle of the face

The peak age of inhalant abuse is 14 to 15. However, abuse is seen in children as young as 5 or 6 years of age. Inhalant abuse is more common in males than females.

What's the best way to prevent inhalant use?

Keep your children safe by having open conversations about the dangers of huffing. Discuss the risks. Talk about what products can be abused, and slang terms for inhalants. Emphasize that inhalants are deadly chemicals — not a harmless way to get high.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.