

Inhalant Abuse:

Nationwide Problem is Also an Arkansas Issue

Many parents and children remain unaware of the health risks of inhalant abuse. Inhalant abuse is the intentional breathing of vapors or fumes from common household and commercial products.¹ Inhalants produce effects similar to those of alcohol intoxication and can be addictive. Depending on the amount inhaled, the user can feel less inhibited or slightly stimulated. Other effects include dizziness, euphoria, lack of coordination, hearing loss, apathy, slurred speech, and even unconsciousness. Long-term effects include brain, bone marrow, kidney, liver, and nerve damage.^{1,2} Sudden sniffing death syndrome, or death by first-time users, is associated with the inhalation of vapors from some aerosol products and air conditioning coolant.¹

Common Products Abused as Inhalants^{1*}

AEROSOLS	GASES	SOLVENTS AND GASES	ADHESIVES	CLEANING AGENTS	FOOD PRODUCTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray paint • Hairspray • Air freshener • Deodorant • Fabric protector • Computer cleaner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nitrous oxide • Butane • Propane • Helium • Ether • Chloroform • Halothane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nail polish remover • Paint thinner • Paint remover • Correction fluid • Toxic magic marker • Pure toluene • Lighter fluid • Gasoline • Carburetor cleaner • Octane booster • Fuel gas • Air conditioning coolant • Lighters • Fire extinguisher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model airplane glue • Rubber cement • PVC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry cleaning fluid • Spot remover • Degreaser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking spray • Whipped cream • Whippets (Whipped cream chargers)

** This is not a complete list of products that can be abused.*



Division of Behavioral Health Services
Prevention Services

Inhalant abuse is a real problem nationwide as well as in the state of Arkansas. Inhalant abuse is more popular than marijuana consumption among sixth- and eighth-graders.³ Recent studies have found:

- In 2011, 9.9 percent of Arkansas children reported abusing inhalants during their lifetime, more than double the rate of reported abuse of over-the-counter drugs.³
- Specifically, 6.8 percent of Arkansas sixth-graders and 11.6 percent of the state's eighth-graders reported abusing inhalants during their lifetime.³
- This same year, 2.9 percent of Arkansas sixth-graders reported having abused inhalants at least once in the past 30 days, making inhalants the most abused substance within this age group.³

What You Can Do¹:

- Learn what products can be harmful if abused as inhalants.
- Know the symptoms of inhalant abuse.
- Avoid buying solvent-based products. Substitute water-based products and non-aerosol packaging.
- Learn what slang words are used to describe inhalants, such as huffing, sniffing, dusting or bagging.
- Discuss inhalant abuse with your children.
- Talk to your children about the proper use of household products, emphasizing the harmful effects if the products are used incorrectly.
- Be aware of what your child is doing at all times after school.
- Keep products stored safely away from young children.
- If solvent-based products are the only alternative, supervise their use and keep them out of reach when not in use.

Back-to-School and Other Products Safety Check⁴:

POSSIBLE INHALANT	SAFE ALTERNATIVE
Magic markers and dry erase markers	Non-toxic/low-odor markers (avoid scented markers)
Glues, rubber/contact cement	Products that do not contain xylene or toluene
Correction fluid	Correction tape
Computer air duster	Canned carbon dioxide
Nail polish and nail polish remover	Non-toxic nail polish and acetone-free nail polish remover
Aerosol deodorant	Stick deodorant
Cooking spray	Oil spray pump
Whipped cream in aerosol cans or cartridges	Whipped cream in tub

Symptoms of Inhalant Abuse⁵:

- Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearance
- Slurred or disoriented speech
- Uncoordinated body movements
- Red eyes and runny nose
- Spots and/or sores around the mouth
- Unusual chemical odor on clothing or breath
- Signs of paint or other products where they wouldn't normally be, such as on face, lips, nose or fingers
- Nausea and/or loss of appetite
- Chronic inhalant abusers may exhibit symptoms such as hallucinations, anxiety, excitability, irritability, restlessness, or anger

DATA SOURCES:

¹ Inhalant Abuse Prevention Program — Facilitator's guide (2006) created by the Alliance for Consumer Education. • ² National Institute on Drug Abuse — Inhalants Drug Facts (2011)

³ 2011 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA). • ⁴ Maine Inhalant Abuse Prevention Work Group — Examples and Alternatives Sheet (2009).

⁵ Inhalant Abuse Prevention Program — FAQ (2004) created by the Alliance for Consumer Education.