

HEADS UP REAL NEWS ABOUT DRUGS AND YOUR BODY



Top 10 Things You Need to Know About Inhalants

Educate yourself about this dangerous class of drugs with our Top 10 list below. Then, complete the true/false activity on the next page.

1

Household products can be dangerous.

Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors that produce mind-altering effects. Some of these come from everyday household products like spray paint, glues, and cleaning fluids. But these toxic chemicals were never meant to be inside a human body!

2

Using inhalants just one time can kill you.

Sniffing highly concentrated amounts of the chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can cause heart attacks and even death within minutes. Known as "Sudden Sniffing Death," this can happen the first time you use inhalants or anytime after. You can also die from lack of oxygen, since you are filling your lungs with chemicals instead of air.

3

No matter how inhalants are taken, they still spell danger.

Inhalants are breathed in through the nose or mouth in a number of ways, variously called sniffing, snorting, huffing, or bagging. But there is no safe way to breathe toxic fumes.

4

Your brain may never be the same again.

The poison in inhalants can kill so many brain cells that brain tissue actually shrinks. People who abuse inhalants may have difficulty with memory, learning, and thinking.

5

When you hurt your brain, you hurt your body.

Inhalants dissolve the protective coating called myelin on neurons, or brain cells. Myelin helps messages travel rapidly along nerve cells. When myelin is damaged, messages move too slowly—resulting in muscle spasms, tremors, and even difficulty walking and talking.

6

By using inhalants, you risk depression.

Inhalants can affect an abuser's mood even when he or she is not huffing. The sniffer can fall into a gloomy mood where nothing about life seems good or hopeful—a condition doctors call depression.

7

You can lose your hearing for good.

Use of toluene (a chemical found in spray paints and glues) and trichloroethylene (a chemical found in cleaning fluids and correction fluids) can cause hearing loss.

8

The destruction could go as deep as inside your bones.

Use of benzene (or gasoline) can damage bone marrow.

9

Damage can go beyond your brain and bones.

Chronic exposure to inhalants can lead to significant damage to the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys.

10

Fewer teens are trying inhalants.

According to a recent NIDA-funded study, 17.1 percent of 8th-graders surveyed had tried inhalants in 2001. In 2002, that number decreased to 15.2 percent.

