Inhalants

Inhalant use refers to the intentional breathing of gas or vapors through one’s mouth or nose with the purpose of reaching a high. Inhalants include thousands of household and commercial products. Their easy accessibility, low cost, and ease of concealment makes them one of the first substances abused.

WHAT TYPES ARE THERE?

SOLVENTS:

Organic solvents are liquid compounds of carbon that have the power to break down or dissolve other carbon compounds. Examples of products containing high levels of organic solvents are gasoline, lighter fluid and butane lighter fuel, spray paint, paint Thinners and removers, transparent glue, rubber-cement thinner, hair spray, nail polish remover, degreasers, and cleaning fluids.

Nitrous oxide, commonly called laughing gas, was the first inhalant used for recreational purposes. Introduced as an anesthetic, dentists still use this compound of nitrogen and oxygen. It doesn’t completely block pain, but it does alter the perception of pain, so that there is no distress. Nitrous oxide tends to produce a pleasant, dreamy state of consciousness, somewhere between waking and sleep. Stored in metal tanks, the compressed gas is also used to make whipped cream. When packaged in small cartridges, called whippets, and enclosed in a container of cream, the gas mixes with the cream when the nozzle is depressed.

Nitrites are compounds of nitrogen and act mainly as vasodilators, causing the walls of blood vessels to relax so that the vessels enlarge or dilate. They are used medically to relieve attacks of angina chest pain. The most commonly abused are amyl nitrite and butyl nitrite. Amyl nitrite is usually packaged in small, crushable glass or plastic capsules, known as poppers or snappers. Butyl nitrite often comes in a bottle or spray can and is sold as an air freshener under names such as Rush and Locker Room.

Effects

- Disruptive behavior
- Muscle weakness
- Headaches
- Attention deficits
- Nausea
- Diminished non-verbal intelligence
- Wheezing
- Chronic absences
- Drowsiness
- Learning problems
- Depressed reflexes
- Severe withdrawal symptoms
- Failing grades

Indicators of Use

- Chemical odors on breath or clothing
- Hidden items (containers, rags, solvents)
- Excitability/irritability
- Stains (paint) on hands/face
- Slurred speech
- Inattentiveness
- Red/runny nose
- Missing household items
- Nausea/loss of appetite
- Drunken appearance