



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Common Inhalants

Hair spray. Gasoline. Spray paint. Glue. Typewriter correction fluid. You probably have at least one of these products in your home. These are just a few of the inhalants that are poisonous when children:

- Sniff or inhale them directly from the cans, bottles, or other containers they are in.
- Spray them into a bag, empty soft drink can, or other container and breathe them in. (Gases like nitrous oxide are often inhaled from balloons.)
- Spray or pour them onto a cloth or piece of clothing and inhale deeply from the fabric.

Generally, inhalants fall into three categories: solvents, gases, and nitrites.

Solvents are usually liquid. They are found in household and industrial products, such as glues, paints, and polishes.

Gases are found in many household and commercial products.

Aerosol sprays like hair spray and spray paint, as well as medical gases like nitrous oxide, fall into this category. Almost all pressurized aerosol sprays can be abused.

Nitrites are found in room deodorizers.

Here is a list of only a few of the common household products that are dangerous when inhaled:

- **Kitchen**
 - Cooking spray
 - Typewriter correction fluid
 - Disinfectants
 - Fabric protectors
 - Felt-tip markers
 - Furniture polish and wax
 - Oven cleaners
- **Bathroom**
 - Air fresheners
 - Spray deodorants
 - Hair sprays
 - Nail polish removers

- **Garage/Workshop**
 - Pressurized aerosol sprays
 - Butane
 - Gasoline
 - Glues and adhesives
 - Paints and paint thinners
 - Refrigerants (freon)
 - Rust removers
 - Spray paints

Keep this list in mind when you consider what products in your home have the potential to be misused.

Inhalant abuse can be deadly and no one can predict how much of an inhalant will kill. A young person can use a certain amount one time and seem fine, but his or her next use could be fatal.

The Texas Commission on Drugs and Alcohol Abuse reports the following ways that inhalants can kill:

- Asphyxia - Solvent gases can cause a person to stop breathing from a lack of oxygen.
- Choking - Users can choke on their own vomit.
- Suffocation - This is more common among users who inhale from plastic bags.
- Injuries - Inhalants can cause people to become careless or aggressive. This often leads to behaviors that can injure or kill, such as operating a motor vehicle dangerously or jumping from great heights. Teens also can get burned or even be killed if someone lights a cigarette while they are huffing butane, gasoline, or some other flammable substance.
- Suicides - Coming down from an inhalant high causes some people to feel depressed, which may lead them to take their own lives.
- Cardiac arrest - Chemicals from inhalants can make the heart beat very fast and irregularly, then suddenly stop breathing. This is called cardiac arrest. One reason why this might happen is that inhalants somehow make the heart extra-sensitive to adrenaline. (Adrenaline is a hormone that the body produces, usually in response to fear, excitement, or surprise.) A sudden rush of adrenaline combined with inhalants can make the heart stop instantly. This "Sudden Sniffing Death," as it is called, is responsible for more than half of all deaths due to inhalant abuse.

Another very real danger of inhalants is that they often lead young people to try other drugs whose effects are even more intense and last longer.