

# Inhalants



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# What are Inhalants?

Inhalant drugs are breathable chemical substances that cause psychoactive or mind-altering effects. Here are some examples of products misused:

- Sniffing and Snorting occurs when a person inhales the product fumes of different solvents, sprays and or gases.
- Huffing the product means covering a piece of cloth with the product and placing it over the mouth to breathe it in.
- Bagging is when the product is placed in a bag and through the mouth and nose the individual takes in the fumes.
- Spraying the product into the mouth is another technique.

## Categories of Inhalants

1. Solvents are powerful inhalants. They are found in household materials such as: spray paint, gasoline and cleaning materials. When sniffed they have alcohol-like intoxication symptoms and they can cause serious mental disorders.
2. When Nitrous Oxide also known as laughing gas is inhaled, it causes a person to experience hallucinations and creates a dreamy state. It also causes anxiety, nausea and other disorders pertaining to the nervous system.
3. Nitrites have the effect of increasing one's heart rate and reduce the blood flow to the brain which then causes a person to feel lightheaded. Nitrites will inflate the blood vessels and relax the muscles at the same time. Nitrites is typically used to enhance sexual performance. Use of Nitrites can cause psychological dependence.

## Prevalence

Inhalant users come from diverse populations, although they are commonly found to be unemployed and belonging to unstable family environments. Many individuals who misuse inhalants also tend to be polysubstance users and resort to inhalant use when their drug of choice is not available.

Results of the Canadian Addiction Survey (2004) of adults found:

- 1.3% reported using inhalants in their lifetime
- 67% reported first use was between 12 - 16
- 13% reported first use before age 12
- 19% reported first use at age 17 and older

## Consequences of Inhalant Addiction

Short term:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Dizziness and confusion
- Disorganized and slurred speech
- Ataxia (Lack of coordination)
- Visual hallucinations and delusions
- Central Nervous System depression (Slowed breathing, decreased heart rate, loss of consciousness)

Long term:

- Heart complications and cardiac arrhythmia
- Lung damage
- Psychomotor retardation
- Anxiety or irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Brain damage
- Accidental trauma
- Coma or sudden death

## Personal and Social

Inhalants cause delinquent behavior and academic difficulties. Users are also at risk for alcohol and prescribed medication abuse. In result of this, inhalant users show poor school performance when compared to their peers. Studies have indicated, poor performance in school leads to higher rates of unemployment and higher arrest.

Sudden Sniffing death can also occur in first time users who take in too much of the product which leads to the individual's heart to fail.

Withdrawal Symptoms

- Hallucinations
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Aggression/Irritability
- Hand tremors
- Nervousness
- Muscle pain
- Psychosis

## Treatment

Research has shown that professional service providers and communities need to be aware of barriers that are associated with inhalant users receiving treatment. Individuals with inhalant abuse or dependence enter treatment for substance and behavioral problems. Inhalant users are vulnerable to other disorders such as major depression, anxiety disorders, suicidality, conduct disorder, physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.