

# REDUCING HARM FROM INHALANTS

THERE HAVE BEEN CASES OF SUDDEN DEATH FOLLOWING INHALANT USE

There is no known safe ways to use inhalants – it is best not to use them at all if possible.

However, it is important to reduce the risks you are taking if you do use inhalants:

- It is safer to use paper bags than plastic bags to avoid suffocation
- Never put your mouth and nose inside the bag
- If using aerosol cans, turn the can upside down before spraying into the bag – this reduces the other poisons you inhale that do nothing for your high
- Inhalants are flammable so avoid smoking near the bag of while using any inhalants.
- Try not to use alone and be with at least one person who is straight

## WHAT IF YOUR FRIEND PASSES OUT?

- Remove the bag from your friend's mouth
- If the person is unconscious, check their airway is clear, place them on their side and into the recovery position
- Call an ambulance on 000 and stay with them
- If breathing has stopped, start applying CPR if you are trained

## USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Emergency **000**  
DirectLine **1800 888 236**  
Drug Info **1300 858 584**  
North and West Metro Alcohol and Other Drug Service Intake **1800 700 514**  
Suicide Helpline **1300 651 251**  
Family Drug Help **1300 660 068**  
North West Mental Health Triage **1300 874 243**

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INHALANTS

AND  
YOUR  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

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SUBSTANCE USE & MENTAL  
ILLNESS TREATMENT TEAM



# INHALANTS AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

## What are Inhalants?

- Inhalants are household or industrial products that can cause intoxication when inhaled
- They are particularly dangerous as these products were never intended to be inhaled
- Most inhalants are highly toxic and can quickly cause serious problems for your mental and physical health
- Using inhalants (glue, gas, poppers) can also be called huffing, sniffing or chroming, although this last term specifically refers to the use of aerosol-based paint

## Long-term Inhalant use

Regular long-term use of inhalants can result in multiple problems, including:

- Dependence
- Sores or rashes around the mouth and nose
- Tremors
- Weight loss
- Feeling unusually thirsty
- Tiredness
- Anaemia
- Irregular heart beat and damage to the heart muscle
- Irritation of the stomach lining and intestines.
- Liver and kidney damage
- Loss of sense of smell or hearing
- Burst blood vessels in the eyes leading to blindness
- Decreased co-ordination, difficulty walking, memory impairment, attention difficulties and reduced ability to think clearly
- Feelings of irritability, hostility and depression

## Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome can occur after using aerosol sprays. It doesn't matter if you are a new or experienced user. Your risk of death is even higher if you have a sudden shock or experience strong emotions when intoxicated.

## Inhalants and your mental health

- Inhalants may make you experience hallucinations, paranoia and confusion
- Inhalants may affect your memory and you may have difficulties thinking clearly
- Inhalants may make you feel more depressed
- Inhalants may increase both anxiety and confusion. You may suffer panic attacks

## HOW DO INHALANTS AFFECT YOU

### Inhalant use can cause:

- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry sore throat and nose
- Damage to your kidneys and liver
- Disorientation and problems with your memory
- Hallucinations (see, hear, smell or feel things that are not there)
- Brain damage including permanent impairment of short-term memory and concentration
- Sudden death

### Immediate effects of Chroming:

- Excitement and euphoria
- Less inhibition and increased risk-taking
- Hallucinations and delusions
- Bad breath
- Nosebleeds, bloodshot eyes and sores.
- Agitation, uneasiness, confusion and disorientation
- Headaches, drowsiness, slurred speech, loss of co-ordination
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Flu-like symptoms, e.g. sneezing and coughing
- Chest pain and irregular heartbeat
- Large amounts of inhalants may cause blackouts, convulsions or even coma

## What happens when you stop using Inhalants?

If you have been using inhalants regularly you may experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop.

### Withdrawal symptoms can include:

- Depression and anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, dizziness and headaches
- Irritable and aggressive behaviour
- You may also experience tremors or shaking

## Inhalants and other drugs

All drugs interact with each other, including inhalants. It is not recommended you smoke tobacco or cannabis, or use stimulants (e.g. speed, coffee or cola) within twenty minutes of chroming.

## Inhalants and pregnancy

Inhaling glues and aerosols during pregnancy can harm your baby and can result in premature birth.