Toxic Solvent Abuse

A drug is a substance that affects living organisms and is used to diagnose, prevent or treat an illness.

Ihalants- describes the method. Something is being inhaled, sniffed or huffed. It does not say what is being inhaled. What are they inhaling? Where does it come from?

Crude oil can be refined into many different chemicals. They are primarily used as:

1) FUEL
2) SOLVENTS

All fuels can be used as solvents. All solvents can be used as fuels. These fossil fuels are volatile. They are flammable. They readily change from liquids to gases. These chemicals make good propellants, flammable propellants.

No longer use the word INHALANTS to describe these chemicals. They are SOLVENTS.

All solvents are TOXIC. They were never meant to go into the human body. They are lethal, deadly.
Solvents are used to dissolve things. They will dissolve things soap and water could never touch. They will dissolve things like tar, paint and adhesives. They melt things on contact. They melt skin, muscle and fat as easily as tar and paint. The “high” kids experience is not drug induced. Solvents are not drugs. They are toxic chemicals that are used to melt things. The effects of solvent exposure are the direct result of “brain melt” or brain trauma. They are:

**Short Term Effects**

- Rapid, Immediate effects
- Short- 5-minute event
- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness
- Accelerated heart rate
- Agitation
- initial Excitation
- then Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Depressed reflexes
- Muscle weakness
- Loss of Coordination
- the Spins
- Headache
- Ringing in the ears
- Loss of sensation
- Giddy feelings
- Confusion
- Delirium
- Hallucinations
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Chemical burns
- Nose bleeds
- Unconsciousness

Again, the lightheaded, dizzy, loss of coordination and “drug-like feeling” is not drug induced. The user is not getting high or drunk. What they are experiencing is the direct result of their brain being melted.
The brain amazingly, will recover from these immediate effects within five minutes. If the body is too threatened, the brain will shut things down. The people breathing the toxic chemicals will pass out. This is the body’s attempt to survive the experience.

Solvents are not water-soluble. They are fat-soluble. The body is about 72% water. The water in one’s body pushes the toxic solvents into muscle and fat. For some reason, solvents tend to collect in nerve linings. The body has a very hard time getting rid of these toxic chemicals. They accumulate. The body becomes more and more toxic. It takes over a month for the body to purge these toxins.

Solvent abuse education should really be taught in terms of environmental pollution, not as drug education. Solvents ravage the body. Meet Solvent Man-

The brain regulates the rhythm of our heart. When children abuse solvents, they are suffocating. Not only are they not breathing fresh air, oxygen, they are breathing toxic fumes. The brain reacts by telling the heart to pump faster. “Hey, give me some oxygen up here.” The child’s heart rate will double.
If the part of the brain that regulates the rhythm of the heart gets melted, the child will die. It is called “Sudden Sniffing Death.” This can happen the first time a kid huffs or the 100th time. This will especially weed out any child with an undiagnosed heart condition.

There are several commonly abused products that do not contain solvents -

**Dust Off**- Dusters work by having both liquid and gas inside the canister - as gas is expelled through the nozzle, the pressure on the inside of the can drops and the liquid remaining in the can begins to boil, creating more gas. If the can is held incorrectly (upside down), the liquid is able to escape and can cause frostbite. Dust-Off is a non-toxic chemical called difluoroethane. It produces a super short high 10 seconds to a minute. Kids describe it as a “slight high” to a “10x better than pot” experience. Some kids say they are going for the “total knockout.” Dusters inhale the product directly and replace regular air with difluoroethane. The 'high' is the sensation created as the brain is deprived of oxygen. It truly is a “knock out.” Kids typically breath Dust-Off until they pass out. They will experience all the effects of asphyxiation - brain damage and/or death.

A warning email has been circulated by Jeff Williams, a police officer in Cleveland, whose son, Kyle, died after inhaling Dust-Off in Ohio. I have run into kids that will do a whole canister in an evening. They believe it is addictive.


**Rush**- Rush is akin to amyl nitrate, the nitro heart medicine. On the street, they it is referred to as poppers or snappers because of the sound it makes when the capsule is broken. Amyl nitrate and butyl nitrate are illegal in the United States. Rush sells cyclohexyl nitrate in the USA. Basically, it relaxes muscle tissue and the lining around blood veins and arteries. It produces an instant rush or high.

Here is the manufacturs disclaimer: RUSH® Liquid Incense® and all our other nitrite based products are sold as room odorants, liquid incense, liquid aroma, aromas or video head cleaner only. Although research indicates it is generally safe to do so, we do not encourage the misuse of our products as poppers. We are not responsible for the media claims that "RUSH® poppers" or "RAMA® poppers" are said to be "aphrodisiacs" or "sex drugs", and we do not endorse such claims. Neither RUSH® Liquid Incense® nor any of our other aroma products contain amyl nitrite or butyl nitrite. They contain isobutyl nitrite, alkyl nitrates, or cyclohexyl nitrates only. RUSH® Liquid Incense® contains exceptionally pure isobutyl nitrite. The Special USA Formula RUSH® Liquid Incense® contains exceptionally pure cyclohexyl nitrite.

I will leave it up to the curious to research the cult and culture of this particular chemical abuse.

**Helium** baloons and **Reddi-Wip** - Helium is not oxygen. Reddi-Wip has a food-grade, nitrous oxide as the propellant. You probably know nitrous oxide as “laughing gas.” Some dentists use it in a monitored and controlled way. It
produces a pleasant, relaxed state that diminishes the sensation of pain. Like helium, nitrous oxide is not oxygen. Whenever you replace air in your lungs with another gas you are temporarily depriving the brain of oxygen. The dangers of oxygen deprivation: retardation, blindness, organ failure, and death, have all been documented after even one minute in some cases. Helium can also replace oxygen in your bloodstream. This makes asphyxiation more likely. People have died breathing the contents of one helium balloon. Apparently, they were going for the entire paragraph instead of one brief snippet.

**Intervention**

**Kids need to hear:**
- come from crude oil
- toxic solvents are not drugs
- solvents melt and dissolve
- don’t mix with water
- sudden sniffing death

**Parents need to:**
- model safe use of toxic chemicals
- think about access/availability
- advocate for youth with stores/manufactures

One last, but important note: In my experience, youth usually abuse toxic solvents in ignorance. Once they realize the damage they are doing to their brain, one can typically get them to agree to never do it again and to give their brain a chance to recover and work around the areas that have been damaged.

I take it a step farther. I ask the youth to swear, to make a solemn oath on something that is very dear to them, and promise to never huff toxic solvents again. This may sound ‘corny,’ but I believe it has helped bolster their commitment. I have had youth swear by elders, grandparents who have gone before them or by little brothers or sisters that they love and have vowed to protect. Some swear before their Creator to keep their word.
I have also encouraged youth to put me in contact with friends and relatives that have “huffed” with them. We try to find discreet ways to meet these friends and educate them as well. It is a good thing, if the abusive group of peers begins to see huffing as uncool, unsafe and off limits.

Gary Russell
Program Director
Evergreen Shelter Program
gary.russell@evergreenyfs.org
P.O. Box 662, Bemidji MN
218-441-4567