

FACTS ABOUT INHALANTS

WHAT ARE INHALANTS

Also known as sniffing, huffing, chroming, poppers, bagging, rexing, rush, climax, ram, thrust, heart-on, jungle juice aroma

Inhalants are volatile substances, which have chemical fumes that sometimes are breathed in to alter the mind and get a “buzz” or feeling of excitement. They are usually a depressant drug, though some inhalants (nitrates) act as a dissociative. Inhalants can be everyday products, such as:

- solvents: paint thinners and removers, glues, correction fluids and marker pens
- aerosols: spray paints, deodorant, hair spray, fabric protector spray, fly spray
- gases: whipped cream dispensers, butane cigarette lighters, refrigerants
- nitrates (amyl, butyl, isobutyl, nitro-glycerine): air fresheners, leather cleaners, nail polish removers.

EFFECTS OF INHALANTS

Inhalants are breathed in by the nose or mouth.

Examples of use:

- “sniffing” or “snorting” fumes directly from a can or containers
- spraying aerosols directly into the nose or mouth (high risk)
- “chroming” or “bagging” – spraying aerosols into a plastic or paper bag for inhaling
- “huffing” – saturating a cloth and stuffing it into the mouth
- inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide.

Effects depend on the person (age, weight, size, health and tolerance), as well as the strength, the amount used, type of inhalant and if used with other drugs, including alcohol. Most inhalants have an immediate effect. The “high” usually only lasts for a few minutes – some will keep on inhaling to prolong the high, sometimes leading to loss of consciousness, brain damage or rarely sudden death

Short-term effects, both desired and undesired, may include...

- feel high, intoxicated, euphoric
- dizziness, confusion, disoriented, impaired judgement
- dulls pain
- slurred speech, nausea, vomiting, headaches
- increased heart rate
- irritation to nose, throat and eyes
- tremors, seizures, hallucinations, delusions, dissociation
- irritable, aggressive
- injuries or burns
- brain damage, unconsciousness, asphyxiation (suffocation if using a plastic bag), death.

Long-term effects may include...

- irritability, depression, tired
- memory loss, reduced concentration
- weight loss, sores around mouth and nose
- breathing problems
- excessive thirst
- loss of sense of smell, sight and hearing, abnormal eye movements
- anaemia, irregular heartbeat
- damage to lungs, heart, liver, brain, nerves, immune and kidney damage
- Inhalant dependence.

OVERDOSE

Effects from overdosing: nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, hallucinations, blackout, seizures and unconsciousness. Sudden death has been known to occur as a result of inhalants causing heart failure but this is rare.

If a person is experiencing an overdose or is unresponsive call 000 for an ambulance. If unconscious, put them in the recovery position. If not breathing, start CPR. Paramedics won't involve police unless the person is a danger to themselves or others.

TIPS FOR REDUCING RISK

There is no safe way to use inhalants. There will always be a health risk. The only way to be safe is not to use. If you choose to use, the following will help reduce risk:

Before: take a friend and tell them what you plan on using

During: go slow, don't inhale too much, do it outside (not in a small area like a toilet cubicle), know and keep to your limits, don't spray directly into your mouth or place a plastic bag over your entire head – these methods can cause suffocation.

Avoid: using inhalants with other drugs, including alcohol, using too much or too often. While using don't be alone, don't drive or do risky activities or be responsible for the care of others.

IS INHALANT USE BECOMING A PROBLEM?

It may be a problem if you agree with any of these statements:

- I struggle to limit or reduce how much I'm inhaling
- I spend a lot of time using inhalants or affected by it
- I often feel strong urges to use inhalants
- I'm unable to perform tasks at work, school or home due to using inhalants
- I have developed a tolerance to inhalants, so I need to have more to feel effects
- I have withdrawal symptoms – depression, anxiety, nausea, reduced appetite, dizziness, tremors.

TIPS FOR PROBLEMATIC INHALANT USE

- seek support from a health professional, as well as from family and friends
- avoid people, places, objects, feelings or situations associated with taking inhalants
- start doing activities you enjoy that don't involve taking codeine
- look after yourself – get enough sleep, follow a healthy diet, adopt a balanced lifestyle
- set some personal goals.

HEROIN AND THE LAW

While not illegal to use inhalants in Australia, police are authorised to remove inhalants and related equipment and to place young people into the care of a responsible person. Supplying an inhalant to a person for the purpose of inhalation is illegal in all Australian states and territories, except for the ACT. The ACT has no legislation relating to inhalant use.

FOR SUPPORT – CALL DRUG ARM

CALL DRUG ARM CENTRAL INTAKE ON 07 3620 8880 DURING BUSINESS HOURS TO ACCESS FREE SUPPORT OR EMAIL INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU. FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, CALL 1300 656 800 OR EMAIL INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU.

FOR 24/7 SUPPORT CALL:

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE:
1800 177 833 (QLD) AND 1800 250 015 (NATIONAL).