

# TRAINING BULLETIN

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## INHALANTS

### INTRODUCTION

Inhalants, sometimes classified as deliriants, are breathable chemicals that produce psychoactive (mind-altering) results including intoxication, euphoria, dizziness, stupefaction, or dulling of the senses or in any manner, change, distort or disturb the audio, or mental process.

Most inhalants are common household products that give off fumes. There are over 1,400 volatile, potentially abusable products on the market today. General classes include volatile solvents (paint, model glue, fingernail polish, lacquer thinners, gasoline and the like), aerosols (hair spray, deodorants, glass chillers), nitrates (room odorizers), and anesthetics (ether, chloroform, nitrous oxide). These products, when used for their intended purpose, are safe. But, these same products, when used for the purpose of getting "high," can be deadly.

The purpose of this bulletin is to present information on the identification, signs and symptoms of inhalant usage.

### BACKGROUND

The practice of inhaling gaseous substances with the intention of getting intoxicated dates back to the 1800's when nitrous oxide (laughing gas), chloroform, and ether were abused for recreational purposes.

At the turn of the 20th century, when petroleum began to be refined and manufactured into new products, such as solvents, thinners, and glues, many more substances began to be inhaled for their intoxicating effects.

Today, "huffing" or "sniffing," the deliberate concentration and inhalation of common household products in order to get high, has been tried by one out of every five children in the United States.

## TYPES OF INHALANTS

There are four major categories of inhalants: volatile solvents, aerosols, nitrites, and anesthetics.

PRODUCT	CHEMICALS
<b>VOLATILE SOLVENTS</b>	
Airplane glue Rubber cement	Toluene, ethyl acetate Toluene, hexane, methyl chloride, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, methyl butyl ketone
PVC cement Lighter fluid Fuel gas Gasoline	Trichloroethylene Butane, propane Butane, isopropane Hydrocarbons
Dry cleaning fluid, spot removers, correction fluid, degreasers Nail polish remover Paint sprays (especially metallic gold and silver) Paint remover/thinners	Tetrachloroethylene, trichloroethylene Acetone Toluene, methylene chloride Toluene, fluorocarbons, hydrocarbon
<b>AEROSOLS</b>	
Hairsprays, deodorants, frying pan lubricants, and glass chillers	Difluorodichloromethane Fluorocarbons
<b>ANESTHETICS</b>	
Nitrous oxide Slang terms: Whipped cream propellant, Whippets, laughing gas, Blue Nun, Nitrous Chloroform Ether Local anesthetic	Nitrous oxide Chloroform Ether Ethyl chloride
<b>NITRITES</b>	
Sold as "room odorizers" in head shops Slang terms: Locker Room, Rush, Climax, Quicksilver, Bolt, Bullet, Poppers	(Iso) amyl nitrite, (Iso) butyl nitrite, Isopropyl nitrite

## METHODS OF USE

"Sniffing" is the street term for breathing in the inhalant directly from the container into the lungs.

"Huffing" is the term for soaking a rag, sock, tissue, or glove with a solvent or dissolved inhalant, then putting the rag to the mouth and inhaling.

"Bagging" means placing the inhalant in a plastic bag and inhaling in and out. Breathing the exhaled air intensifies the effect.

"Spraying" is the act of spraying the inhalant directly into the nose or mouth.

"Balloon and cracker" is the act of attaching a balloon to a container called a "cracker" (usually a cylinder of nitrous oxide) and releasing the inhalant, which inflates the balloon. The inhalant is then inhaled from the balloon.

Other methods include putting a bag over one's head, spraying an aerosol into the bag, and inhaling; pouring or spraying inhalants onto clothing (cuffs, sleeves, collars, etc.) or twist-cap beverage containers and then sniffing the vapors.

### ON-SET AND DURATION OF EFFECTS

The effects of an inhalant occur rapidly. Duration depends on the particular substance. The nitrites produce effects that last about 30 seconds; nitrous oxide can last up to five minutes; volatile solvents can produce effects which last 30 minutes to several hours after exposure.

Things To Look For	INHALANTS
Nystagmus	Depends on substance
Pupils	Normal or possibly dilated
Pulse	Elevated
Blood Pressure	Elevated (volatile solvents) Lowered (nitrites and anesthetics)
Mental Status	Confusion Distorted perception Bizarre thoughts Impaired attention Euphoria
Other signs	Red, glassy eyes Intoxication Slurred speech Staggering gait Dizziness Numbness Inflamed nose Nosebleeds Odor of substance Decreased appetite Muscle fatigue
Overdose Signs	Nausea Hallucinations Coma Death

### HEALTH HAZARDS

Sniffing highly concentrated amounts of the chemicals in solvents can induce heart failure and death. This is especially common from the abuse of fluorocarbons and butane-type gases.

High concentrations of inhalants displace oxygen in the lungs causing suffocation as well as effecting the central nervous system which causes breathing to cease.

Serious But Potentially Reversible Effects Include:

- Liver and kidney damage - toluene and chlorinated hydrocarbons
- Blood oxygen depletion - organic nitrites and methylene chloride

Irreversible Effects Caused By Inhaling Specific Solvents Are:

- Hearing loss - toluene and trichloroethylene
- Peripheral neuropathies or limb spasms - hexane and nitrous oxide
- Brain damage - toluene
- Bone marrow damage - benzene

Inhalants are easily obtained and are commonly found in most homes. These are commercial products, but when inhaled are capable of producing harmful effects on the mind and can be quite toxic in small quantities.

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