

March 24, 2005

Inhalants: Nothing to Sniff At

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, although many parents are concerned about drugs such as marijuana and cocaine, they too often ignore the dangers of common household products that contain volatile solvents or aerosols. Yet inhalants are the third most abused substances among 12 to 14-year-olds in the United States, coming in right behind alcohol and tobacco.

There is no safe level of inhalant use. Nearly one in four 6th to 8th graders has intentionally inhaled to get high, often by the age of 11.

What Is Abused?

Over 1,000 common everyday products found in homes, offices, and schools. Some examples are:



- ◆ Gasoline
- ◆ Paint thinner
- ◆ Nitrous oxide
- ◆ Aerosol propellants in products like whipped cream, hair spray, and deodorant sprays.
- ◆ Glue
- ◆ Correction fluid

39% of deaths by inhalants are the result of first time use that induces heart failure or suffocation. The result is Sudden Sniffing Death.



Who Are The Abusers?

- ◆ 2004 *Monitoring the Future Survey* shows a jump in the number of 8th graders who have used inhalants at least once in their lives from 15.8% in 2003 to 17.3% in 2004.
- ◆ 2000 *CT State Incentive Grant Survey* indicates that 11.1% of 7th and 8th graders, and 14.4% of 9th and 10th graders report use of inhalants at least once in their lives.
- ◆ 2004 NECSA (Northeastern CT) survey reports that 12% of 9th graders and 15% of 10th graders report use of inhalants at least once in their lives.

What Are The Effects?

- ◆ Short-term effects include *stimulation* followed by *depression, headache, slurred speech, loss of motor coordination and breathing difficulties.*
- ◆ Chronic use produces *hearing loss and damage to the central nervous system (including the brain), bone marrow, kidneys and liver, and blood oxygen depletion.*

What Is Being Done?

Education is the key. Research shows that rates of use declined in the early 1990's with public education and awareness campaigns. Without a focus on inhalants in the last 10 years, there has been a slow increase in the number of users. Prevention efforts focus on educating parents, teachers and adults who work with youth. To address the threat of inhalant abuse in CT, the CT Inhalant Task Force has distributed 400 curriculum kits throughout the state to help disseminate factual and reliable information. A statewide network has been developed to assist local families and communities understand the danger that inhalants pose to the health and safety of youth.

National Inhalant & Poisons Awareness Week, March 20 - 26

The CT Statewide Inhalant Task Force is a partnership between DMHAS and the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council, Inc., and operates as a subcommittee of the CT Coalition for the Advancement of Prevention.

For more information on the CT Inhalant Task Force or to locate resources in your community, contact Marlene F. McGann at 203-294-3591 or mbfmcg@aol.com