

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome (SSDS)

There are more than 1,400 household products in different forms that can be used as inhalants to get high. Some of the commonly used inhalants are glue, gas, nail polish remover, spray paint and paint thinners. Some of the ways in which inhalants are abused include:

- sniffing directly from the container, can or bottle
- heating the solvent and then inhaling the vapours
- putting the solvent into a bag and holding the opening of the bag over the mouth and breathing it in
- huffing (putting the inhalant on a cloth and placing it over the mouth)
- inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide

Inhaled chemicals are quickly absorbed through the lungs enter the bloodstream and then are distributed to the brain and other organs.

Inhalant users usually consist of people who don't have access to other drugs or alcohol, such as children and teens. Inhalant abuse is most popular among children and teens. Even though there are different ingredients in inhalants, they produce similar effects by slowing down the brain function and leaving the person in a drunk-like state of mind. It is also much easier to get hooked on inhalants because of their availability and low cost.

Statistics reveal that:

- **10.1% of 8th graders have abused inhalants at least once in the past year**
- **5.6% of 10th graders have abused inhalants at least once in the past year**
- **1.5% of 12th graders have abused inhalants at least once in the past year**

Inhalant abuse, especially in children and teens, is an alarming issue due to the number of deaths associated with its use from sudden sniffing death syndrome (SSDS). SSDS is heart failure resulting from an irregular heartbeat usually caused by stress or strenuous activity after using inhalants. It is thought that the inhalant drug makes the heart increasingly sensitive to the effects of adrenaline. Usually, the user has been startled (possibly because he or she has been caught), or has engaged in rigorous activity following the use of the drug; collapse and death follow.

It is important to understand the risks associated with inhalant abuse and to inform parents and their children about SSDS. In order to reduce and prevent SSDS, parents and teachers must start to acknowledge this issue and inform youth about the dangers of inhalant use and SSDS. Even though there is an increasing number of inhalant abusers, rehab programs are limited due to overall low demands for treatment. Increased awareness about solvent addiction can help to increase support resources for those who need them.