



# Youth-Serving Professionals Can Help Prevent Inhalant Abuse





**AUDIENCE:** Adults Only

## HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT INHALANT ABUSE

Inhalant abuse is the intentional breathing in of gas and vapors for their mind-altering effects. There are over 1,000 common household, school, and industrial products that can be abused. When used in this way, inhalants are poisonous.

### **You can help prevent this problem by taking a few steps:**

- Find out about the types of products that can be abused and signs of abuse.
- Make sure children are getting the message about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, including inhalant abuse.
- Avoid buying products that can be easily abused. These include products that fall into the categories of fuels, nitrites, solvent-based products, and anything in an aerosol can.
- Buy water-based versions of air fresheners, correction fluids, glues, and magic markers.
- When you cannot use water-based products, require that the product be used with adult supervision. Always keep it safely away from children and teens.
- Talk to other professionals such as school principals, teachers, and after-school personnel about including prevention measures in their programs.
- If you are concerned about a child's behavior, talk to your supervisor about what you have observed. Remember, one of the attractions of inhalants is that adults don't often ask youth about them.
- See the Resources section for more details and commend yourself for the steps you are taking to protect youth.

## EXAMPLES OF INHALANTS IN THE SCHOOL, HOME, AND OFFICE AND THEIR SAFER ALTERNATIVES

Product Type	Source of Inhalants	Prevention Strategies
<b>General Supplies</b>	Cements and glues	Use water-based products. Supervise use of solvent-based products.
	Correction fluid	Use water-based products. Supervise use of solvent-based products. <i>Better idea:</i> Use correction tape.
	Magic markers, dry erase markers	Use water-based products. Supervise use of solvent-based products. <i>Better idea:</i> Use “low-odor” markers.
<b>Cleaning Supplies</b>	Any product in an aerosol can	Use hand pumps instead of aerosol cans.
	Aerosol air fresheners and deodorizers	Supervise use of these products. Use solid air fresheners.
	Computer cleaner (“air duster”)	Supervise use of these products. Use canned carbon dioxide.
<b>Wood Shop</b>	Paints, varnishes, stains, paint thinner	Use water-based products. Supervise use of solvent-based products.
	Contact cement	Use water-based products. Supervise use of these products.
	Computer cleaner (“air duster”)	Supervise use of these products. Use canned carbon dioxide.
<b>Art Supplies</b>	Rubber cement	Use water-based products. Supervise use of these products.
	Printing inks	Use water-based products. Supervise use of these products.
	Spray paints and clear finishes	Use water-based products. Supervise use of these products.

Product Type	Source of Inhalants	Prevention Strategies
<b>Auto</b>	Degreasers, spray lubricants, solvents, Freon®, brake fluid, gasoline, lacquers, lacquer thinners	Supervise use of solvent-based products.
<b>Health and Beauty</b>	Nail polish and nail polish remover, hair spray	Supervise use of these products.
	Deodorants	Supervise use of these products. Use stick deodorants.
<b>Cooking Supplies</b>	Cooking spray	Supervise use of these products. Use oil in a spray pump.
	Whipping cream in aerosol cans, whipping cream cartridges (whippets)	Supervise use of these products. Use whipped cream in a tub or make from scratch.

### Here are some of the dangers of inhalant use:

- Breathing concentrated amounts of these gases and vapors can cause brain, nerve, kidney, and liver damage.
- Death can result from even one-time use. Some children have accidents, choke to death, or have heart attacks.
- For some, inhalant use becomes an addiction. Younger children may just use inhalants, while older youth are more likely to use inhalants with alcohol and other drugs.

### What are some of the reasons youth use inhalants?

- Inhalants are easy to obtain, free or inexpensive, and difficult to detect.
- Many adults are not aware of inhalants, so use may go unnoticed.
- Many children are not aware of how dangerous these products are.
- It takes effect very quickly.



## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF INHALANT USE?

### **If you are concerned that a child or adolescent may be using inhalants, look for:**

- Empty product containers, especially butane lighters and aerosol cans
- Bags, rags, gauze, or soft drink cans that are used to inhale the fumes
- Paint, gasoline, or glue odors

### **You may see symptoms such as:**

- An unusual harsh breath odor
- A rash, blisters, or soreness around the nose, mouth, or on the lips
- Runny nose, sniffing, and coughing
- Irritated or glazed eyes or dilated pupils

### **What should you do if you find a person in crisis from using inhalants?**

- Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking on vomit.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number and stay with the person until he or she sees a doctor.
- See that he or she gets fresh air.
- Provide reassurance.
- Remain calm. (Scaring or chasing the person may increase the risk of a heart attack.)
- Follow up to ensure that the youth receives an assessment for treatment. You can advise parents to call their health insurer or use one of the Resources on page 5 to consider the best options.

# RESOURCES

## Helplines

### Youth Central Intake and Care Coordination (YCICC)

1-617-661-3991 or 1-866-705-2807  
TTY: 1-617-661-9051  
Monday-Friday except holidays  
[www.healthrecovery.org](http://www.healthrecovery.org)

When there is a question about substance use, finding someone who can answer questions is a big relief. Care coordinators can help you decide what might be the best choice for families. This state-funded service helps Massachusetts youth and families access treatment programs specifically for teens. YCICC is a project of the Institute for Health and Recovery.

### Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline

1-800-327-5050  
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370  
7 days a week  
[www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com)

The Helpline can answer questions about substance abuse or make referrals to treatment for people of all ages.

### Emergency Services Programs (ESP)

1-877-382-1609  
TTY: 1-800-249-9949  
24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year  
[www.masspartnership.com/member/esp.aspx](http://www.masspartnership.com/member/esp.aspx)

ESP is available to the uninsured, MassHealth subscribers, and many insured Massachusetts residents of all ages. This service can address issues that involve both substance abuse and mental health.

### Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island

1-800-222-1222  
TTY: 1-888-244-5313  
24 hours a day  
[www.maripoisoncenter.com](http://www.maripoisoncenter.com)

Contact the Center for product or poisoning information. In an immediate emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number.

### Web-based and Printed Information for Professionals and/or Parents

#### Massachusetts Department of Public Health

[www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant](http://www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant)  
[www.mass.gov/parentpower](http://www.mass.gov/parentpower)

#### Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse

1-800-952-6637  
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370  
[www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse](http://www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse)

Download or order free pamphlets and booklets on how to protect children from substance use and information on other health issues.

**Thank you for your professional  
support in keeping our youth healthy.**

