

MANITOBA ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK

TOPIC:	FastFacts on Inhalants
AUDIENCE:	Grades 3 – 12; adult
OUTCOME:	Identify helpful and/or harmful substances (i.e., vitamins, medicines, tobacco, alcohol) and their effects on a healthy body.

- Inhalants are products with poisonous fumes that people inhale to get high.
- Inhalant abuse occurs when people inhale substances to get high, instead of using them for their manufactured purpose.
- Over 1400 products are used as inhalants.
- Most inhalants are products made from crude oil (petroleum) including gasoline, automotive fluids and various consumer products called solvents.
- Inhalants are commonly called solvents because so many solvents are used as inhalants.
- Solvents are products that are good for dissolving, coating or sticking to surfaces. Solvents have poisonous fumes and evaporate easily.
- Inhalants are also commonly known as sniff.
- Inhalants are taken into the body by sniffing, or by breathing them in through the mouth (huffing).
- Inhalant abuse is a common form of drug abuse around the world because inhalants are cheap, accessible and produce an almost immediate high.
- The poisonous chemicals in inhalants make users sick, and can even kill.
- Inhalant abuse is very dangerous because inhalants can damage internal organs including nerve cells and brain cells.
- Pollution from petroleum products and aerosol containers can poison the air, land and water.



How Inhalant Abuse Affects the Body.....

Short Term Effects....

- ◆ Once inhaled, fumes go from the nose to the bloodstream and quickly affect the heart, lungs and brain.
- ◆ Unlike most drugs or regular food, inhalants do not travel first through the digestive system or through the kidneys and liver where they can be filtered out of the blood. Instead, they move quickly from the lungs and heart into the bloodstream.
- ◆ The chemical nature of inhalants causes them to concentrate in the central nervous system - the body's computer and information highway.
- ◆ This speedy movement into the central nervous system explains why inhalants have an almost immediate effect on users.
- ◆ Inhalants punish our internal organs, causing the heart and lungs to work irregularly. They can cause fatal heart attacks.
- ◆ Users usually experience a short high that lasts from a few moments to half an hour. They may feel dizzy, giddy or clumsy. They may slur their speech, lose their sense of judgement or get aggressive.
- ◆ The short high is followed by a long "downer" of pain and discomfort. After-effects of inhalants include:
 - Nosebleeds
 - Bad breath
 - Dizziness
 - Nausea
 - Lack of appetite
 - Drooling
 - Weak muscles
 - Bad coordination
 - Headache
 - Sores on mouth and nose
 - Slow reflexes
 - Sensitivity to light.

Long Term Effects.....

- ◆ Inhalants are poisons that weaken the body and can eventually kill the user.
- ◆ It takes ten days for inhalant chemicals to clear out of the body's systems. Repeated use means that these toxic chemicals can build up in the central nervous system and cause serious damage.
- ◆ There are various levels of damage:
 - Mood swings and lack of energy.
 - Personality changes, memory loss, attention/thinking problems.
 - Severe brain damage. Effects may be permanent.
- ◆ Long-term use may cause severe damage to lungs, kidneys, liver, heart, blood, immune system and senses.
- ◆ The most severe effect of inhalant abuse is death, which can happen after only one use. Death by inhalants has many forms:
 - Sudden sniffing death caused by irregular heartbeat.
 - Breathing stops because the lungs can't get any oxygen.
 - Suffocating with plastic bags.
 - Choking on vomit.

Information adapted from ***BE A PREVENTION PLAYER: A Resource for Inhalant Abuse Prevention Education*** published by the Indian-Metis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg, Inc.