



Grade 4: Parent Assignment #5 Inhalants



Inhalants are common products found right in the home and are among the most popular and deadly substances kids abuse. Inhalant abuse can result in death from the very first use. According to the annual Monitoring the Future national poll, approximately one in six children will use inhalants by eighth grade. The same report notes that inhalants are most popular with younger teens. Teens use inhalants by sniffing or "snorting" fumes from containers; spraying aerosols directly into the mouth or nose; bagging, by inhaling a substance inside a paper or plastic bag; huffing from an inhalant-soaked rag; or inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide.

Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors that produce psychoactive (mind-altering) effects. Although people are exposed to volatile solvents and other inhalants in the home and in the workplace, many do not think of "inhalable" substances as drugs because most of them were never meant to be used in that way. Young people are likely to abuse inhalants, in part, because inhalants are readily available and inexpensive. Parents should see that these substances are monitored closely so that children do not abuse them.

Health Effects and Risks. Nearly all abused inhalants produce effects similar to anesthetics, which act to slow down the body's functions. When inhaled in sufficient concentrations, inhalants can cause intoxicating effects that can last only a few minutes or several hours if inhalants are taken repeatedly. Initially, users may feel slightly stimulated; with successive inhalations, they may feel less inhibited and less in control; finally, a user can lose consciousness.

Irreversible hazards. Inhalants are toxic. Chronic exposure can lead to brain damage or nerve damage similar to multiple sclerosis; damage to the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys; and prolonged abuse can affect thinking, movement, vision and hearing.

Sniffing highly concentrated amounts of the chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can directly induce heart failure and death. Heart failure results from the chemicals interfering with the heart's rhythm regulating system, causing the heart to stop beating. This is especially common from the abuse of fluorocarbons and butane-type gases. High concentrations of inhalants also cause death from asphyxiation, suffocation, convulsions or seizures, coma, choking or fatal injury from accidents while intoxicated. Other irreversible effects caused by inhaling specific solvents are:

- Hearing loss - toluene (paint sprays, glues, dewaxers) and trichloroethylene (cleaning fluids, correction fluids)
- Peripheral neuropathies or limb spasms - hexane (glues, gasoline) and nitrous oxide (whipping cream, gas cylinders)

- Central nervous system or brain damage - toluene (paint sprays, glues, dewaxers)
- Bone marrow damage - benzene (gasoline)
- Liver and kidney damage - toluene- containing substances and chlorinated hydrocarbons (correction fluids, dry- cleaning fluids)
- Blood oxygen depletion - organic nitrites ("poppers," "bold," and "rush") and methylene chloride (varnish removers, paint thinners)

Prevention. Parents can keep their child away from inhalants by talking to them and letting them know the dangers of inhalants. Most young users don't realize how dangerous inhalants can be. Inhalants are widely available and inexpensive, and parents should be mindful about how and where they store common household products.

Parents should be aware of the following signs of an inhalant abuse problem:

- Chemical odors on breath or clothing;
- Paint or other stains on face, hands, or clothes;
- Hidden empty spray paint or solvent containers and chemical-soaked rags or clothing;
- Drunk or disoriented appearance;
- Slurred speech;
- Nausea or loss of appetite;
- Inattentiveness, lack of coordination, irritability, and depression;
- Missing household items.

Source: <http://www.theantidrug.com/drug-information/commonly-abused-drugs/inhalants>

Assignment

Ask your child to review the day's lesson and handouts with you. Discuss their feelings about the lesson and any issues that may have come up for them that day in school.

- 1) Discuss with your child the dangers of inhalant abuse to make sure they fully understand the issues involved.
- 2) Practice some scenarios where your child refuses peer pressure to experiment with inhalants and other drugs. Ask your child to think of some situations, and how they would handle peer pressure.
- 3) Do a fun weekend activity together that focuses on something your child likes to do. Use the time to talk to your child about the dangers of inhalants and other drugs.
- 4) If applicable: Tell your child of a time that you were tempted to use drugs, but refused. What was the situation? How did you handle it? What did you learn? Then ask your child if he/she has experienced a similar situation that made them feel uncomfortable.



Livingston Youth and Community Services

Grade 4: Parent Assignment #5 - Inhalants

Student's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Which assignment did you choose, and why? _____

Was this lesson helpful? Yes/ No

Please explain _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Raffle Entry

Grade 4: Parent Assignment #5 - Inhalants

Student's Name: _____ Parent's Name: _____

School: _____ Grade 4

Please complete this sheet and return to LYCS, PO Box 822, Livingston, NJ 07039,
Fax: 973-992-9318, email: lycs@livingston.org, or leave at reception in school