



(A joint project between the  
Rotary Club of Brisbane  
Mid-City and DRUG ARM)



Centre for Addiction Research & Education  
(A division of DRUG ARM Australasia)

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# Inhalants

## **Slang terms**

Chroming, sniffing.

## **What are Inhalants?**

Inhalants are gases or fumes released from products, commonly found at the supermarket, and deliberately breathed in by the user to obtain an intoxicating effect. These substances are easily absorbed through the lungs and carried to the brain, where they depress the central nervous system. The effect is very similar to alcohol or cannabis.

## **Most common Inhalants**

- Glue
- Aerosol spray cans
- Correction fluid
- Felt-tipped pens
- Paint thinner
- Nitrous oxide
- Cleaning fluid
- Chrome based paint
- Gas from lighters/BBQ
- Petrol

## **Immediate effects**

The effects vary depending on the person, the amount inhaled and the person's mood. They include:

- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Bad breath
- Nose bleeds & sores
- Reckless behaviour
- Less inhibition similar to the effect of alcohol
- Change in moods (excited, euphoric, agitated and uneasy)
- Flu-like symptoms (sneezing, coughing, runny eyes)
- Disorientation and incoordination

## **Long-term effects**

Most long-term effects are not permanent and can be reversed if use is stopped. However, inhalation of cleaning products, correction fluid and aerosol sprays can cause permanent damage.

Permanent brain damage is rare but can occur with heavy, prolonged use.

Health problems include:

- Tremors
- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Thirstiness
- Anaemia

# Inhalants...

- Paleness
- Lead in petrol and some chemicals in other inhalants may build up in the body and cause:
  - Irritation of the lining of stomach and intestines
  - Damage to brain, nervous system, kidneys and liver
  - Stupor or coma, problems with breathing, irregular heartbeat and sometimes seizures, with prolonged and heavy use
- Irritability
- Illogical thinking
- Drinking alcohol in conjunction can increase damage to the body

## Why do people use Inhalants?

The most common reasons for using inhalants are:

- To have fun
- Experimentation
- For excitement
- To forget problems
- Peer pressure
- To feel adult
- Cheap alternative to alcohol
- Rebellion against authority

## What to do in an emergency

- Stay calm
- Do not startle or scare - can cause panic and/or seizure
- Stay with them
- Allow them to breathe fresh air
- Move them out of danger
- Place in the recovery position if unconscious
- Seek medical help IMMEDIATELY
- Commence CPR if they have stopped breathing

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