



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**April 2009 – Inhalant Awareness**

Cathy Arbogast is the Program Administrator for Centre County Drug and Alcohol. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

Did you know that, in the last 12 months, 3.4% of 12 year old children got high using a product that could be in your house right now? What would that be? Inhalants.

One in five students in America has used an inhalant to get high by the time he or she reaches the eighth grade. Many parents don't realize that inhalants are cheap, legal and accessible products and are as popular as marijuana among middle school students.

Inhalant use, or “huffing,” involves breathing gas or vapors from a product with the purpose of reaching a high. You may be familiar with many of these products, such as paint or glue. But there are more than 1,000 products that are very dangerous when inhaled -- things like typewriter correction fluid, air-conditioning refrigerant, felt tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, butane and even cooking spray.

“Huffing” produces effects similar to anesthetics, which slow down the body's function. Depending on the dosage, the user can experience slight stimulation, feeling of less inhibition or loss of consciousness. The user can also suffer from Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, meaning the user can die the 1st, 10th or 100th time they use an inhalant.

Long-term effects include damage to the heart, kidney, brain, liver, bone marrow and other organs. If done during pregnancy, results similar to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may occur. Inhalants are not drugs. They are poisons and toxins and should be described that way. They are physically and psychologically addicting and users suffer withdrawal symptoms.

What can you do?

- Start educating your children early. For younger children, link inhalants to safety or environmental issues.
- Determine how much your child already knows – and build on that knowledge.
- Be a good role-model. Read labels and exercise good safety precautions when using solvents and other products.
- With an older child, talk about peer pressure and the potential consequences of dangerous behavior. Be clear about the rules and your expectations regarding the use of any substance.
- Be aware of physical and behavioral changes in your child – and talk to them about those changes.

Like many other topics addressed in this article series, inhalant use is a conversation every parent (or interested adult) needs to have with their child/adolescent. It is never too early to teach your children about these dangers. Inhalant use can start as early as elementary school and is a potential gateway to further substance abuse.

Parents should educate themselves about inhalant use and educate their children before it is too late. For more information about inhalant abuse, visit the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at <http://www.inhalants.org>.

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