

*Parents underestimate
their children's exposure
to illegal drugs*



Within Australian society today it is very difficult to turn to any form of popular media, including newspapers, magazines and even television news without seeing a story relating to drug abuse. There can be no doubt that drugs and alcohol have become a serious problem within Australia - a problem that our young people are becoming less exempt from everyday.

We all want to help our children, but often we just don't know how. The practice of positive parenting, which is quickly becoming popular within international circles, is a concept that at times is over looked by many cultures that make up Australia's society.

Ultimately, positive parenting is parental and guardian attitudes, as well as the family environment that predominantly shapes children's early life and behaviour. It is at this stage that children learn from their immediate families, mimicking both good and bad habits. For this reason it is important to utilise positive parenting techniques such as the setting good standards, encouraging responsibility, spending quality time together, praise and confidence building – as this acts as one of the best long term drug prevention techniques possible for communities.



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Inhalants

**Australian Greek
Welfare Society**



What are 'Inhalants'?

'Inhalants' are a variety of dangerous chemicals found in every household, including cleaners and fuels that may be sniffed by young children either directly from their packaging or through plastic bags to achieve a 'drunken' like state.

Children as young as 7*, but generally between the ages of 12 and 17 are known to be the most common users, and based on the 1996 Victorian School Students and Drug Use Survey we see that at least 24% of all students have tried inhalants at least once in their lifetime.

Why do people use them?

The reasons given by children for their experimentation consist of the desire to belong to a group, to deal with or escape emotional problems they may be facing, or because they are cheap and easier to obtain than other drugs.

Common effects

The known effects of inhalants resemble those of alcohol use, including erratic behaviour, slurred speech, sneezing, coughing, nausea and vomiting. Excessive use may lead to eye, brain, liver, kidney and nerve damage – however these are rare occurrences.

Associated dangers

The main danger resulting from sniffing include accidents such as falling from high

places, suffocating on plastic bags used for sniffing, behaving recklessly, or choking on vomit when unconscious.

Signals to watch out for

There are no clear signs that identify when a person has been using solvents, but some possible signals to watch out for include the possession of large amounts of these products, chemical smells on clothes and breath, unexplainable drunken behaviour, red eyes or spots around the mouth or nose, coughs and occasional nose bleeds.

What to do ...

If you suspect or find someone using inhalants, never chase, alarm or excite them – any confrontation whilst in their drunken state may lead to serious consequences, including the possibility of death.

For this reason (amongst others), it is important that no confrontation take place prior to the inhalant user having completely recovered (sobering).

If you find someone unconscious, immediately dial 000 and ask for ambulance assistance.

* (Australian Institute on Alcohol and Addictions)

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 - Positive Parenting & Drug Prevention
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