

Teachers & Youth Service Providers:

Inhalant Abuse Prevention and What You Can Do About It

Educate yourself about the problem. Educate yourself and others about inhalant abuse including what types of products can be abused and the signs of abuse.

Don't make available products that can be easily abused. These include correction fluid, glues made with solvents, and dry erase and permanent markers, etc. Many of these items are often found in community centers. Instead, look for water-based versions of these products. Please use the contact information below for a more comprehensive list of products that can be misused as inhalants and safer alternatives.

Ensure that youth are getting the message about the dangers of inhalant abuse. The main prevention messages are that INHALANTS ARE POISONS, POLLUTANTS, TOXINS AND FIRE HAZARDS. THEY ARE DANGEROUS AND SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN THE WAY THEY WERE INTENDED. Take care to avoid describing what products can be abused, how they can be abused, or that children are using them to get "high." Inhalant abuse prevention activities should be included in activities along with health education, environmental protection, and fire safety activities or other drug and alcohol activities. Another approach is Peer Education Programs, where youth teach other youth health information and healthy behaviors. Inhalant prevention activities should begin with elementary school age children since inhalants are among the first drugs that youth use. Nationally, use is highest among 12 – 17 year olds, peaking with 14 year olds.

Be conscious of how much of an item is being used by students. If solvent based products are used, they should always be used under close adult supervision. Examples of these products include: spray paints, solvent based glues, gasoline, paint thinners, and all products packaged in aerosol cans. If it seems like more is being used than is necessary, ask questions and monitor the items closely.

When you are suspicious about a child's behavior or appearance, be sure to follow up. Ask them about inhalants and be specific about why you are suspicious. Don't dismiss your gut feeling telling you that something is not right. REMEMBER, ONE OF THE ATTRactions OF INHALANTS IS THAT ADULTS ARE NOT SUSPICIOUS OF IT AND DON'T RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF USE. If you have concerns or questions, you can follow-up with the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Teachers may also follow-up with the school counselor, school nurse and school administrators.

Don't tolerate any experimentation. Remember, even first time use can be fatal. If you discover or see a child using inhalants approach them calmly, as startling someone using inhalants could cause them to go into shock. Remove the child from the source and into fresh air. Seek an alcohol and drug assessment or take other appropriate action. Even if it turns out to be a false alarm, your action sends a clear message about your expectations.

Encourage the Purchase of Safer Alternatives for all schools and centers within your community. Removing unsafe products from community centers and schools is an excellent way of reducing youth access to inhalants.

For more information: Contact the Office of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services or contact the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

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Created by the **Maine Inhalant Abuse Prevention Work Group**

For more information about inhalants please contact:

Maine Office of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services

Information and Resource Center

Phone: 1-800-499-0027 TTY – 711 (Maine Relay)

Email: samhs.irc@maine.gov Web Address: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/irc>