

An important message from the Community Health Education Team

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As parents, guardians and trusted adults, we want to provide the safest environment for our children. We are concerned about illegal and illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, meth, heroin and LSD, but often ignore the dangers posed to our children from common household products.

Many of these products can be used for inhalant abuse. Many of the household products contain volatile solvents or chemicals. These products can be such common items such as glues, nail polish remover, lighter fluid, spray paints, deodorant and hair sprays, whipped cream canisters, and cleaning fluids, and are widely available and easily accessible.

Many young people inhale the vapors from these sources in order to obtain a quick intoxication without being aware of the serious health consequences that can result.

The most recent name of this type of use is called "Huffing," but is more commonly known as "sniffing" to most people in our community.

Huffing or sniffing is a form of inhalant abuse. It was not too long ago that our community felt the loss of a young person due to inhalant use.

The loss of life from doing this type of inhaling was devastating to the community, family, relatives and friends.

One grandmother affected by this loss expressed her observation that we must continually and consistently inform and educate our community of this type of activity in an all out effort to keep our children safe.

The accidental death confirmed what can occur at any given time by inhaling to obtain a "high." It is a dangerous and risky.

Everyone must know that experimentation with these substances should not be taken lightly. Even a single session of repeated inhalant abuse can disrupt heart rhythms and cause death from cardiac arrest or lower oxygen levels enough to cause suffocation.

Regular abuse of these substances can result in serious harm to vital organs including the brain, heart, kidneys and liver.

Now that you have a brief glimpse as to what inhalant

abuse is, we hope you will look forward to reading future articles on this topic.

The Community Health Education Team wants to provide a way for you to become better informed about the dangers of inhalant use and abuse.

First question

The first thing most people want to know is, What are inhalants?

Inhalants are volatile substances that produce chemical vapors. These vapors can be inhaled to induce or bring about a psychoactive, or mind-altering, effect.

Although other abused substances can be inhaled, the term "inhalants" is used to describe a variety of substances whose main common characteristic is that they are rarely, if ever, taken by any route other than inhalation.

This definition of inhalants involves a broad range of chemicals found in hundreds of different products that may have different pharmacological effects. Because of this, trying to attempt a precise category for inhalants is hard to do.

One classification lists four general categories, which we found is the easiest to share and easiest for people to understand.

They are: Volatile solvents, aerosols, gases and nitrites. The difference among these substances is based on the form in which they are often found in household, industrial and medical products.

Volatile solvents are liquids that vaporize at room temperature. They are found in such things as paint thinners and removers, dry-cleaning fluids, degreasers, gasoline, glues, correction fluids and felt-tip markers. As you can see, these are common household products that are inexpensive and easily obtained.

Aerosols are sprays that contain propellants and solvents, such as spray paints, deodorant, hair sprays, vegetable oil sprays for cooking, and fabric protector sprays.

As you can see, these are products that have a "spray" action from a canister. The spray is propelled out from the can. These are very easy products to get a hold of, as many are found in our home.

The key is to be aware, safely

Inhalant abuse is cheap, it is easy to get the products needed for a high, and it is often an activity we tend to overlook, until it is too late.

store your product

Gases include medical anesthetics as well as gases used in household or commercial products. Medical anesthetic gases include ether, chloroform, halothane, and nitrous oxide, most commonly known as "laughing gas."

Nitrous oxide is the most abused of these gases and can be found in whipped cream dispensers and products that boost octane levels in racing cars.

Household or commercial products containing gases include butane lighters, propane tanks, whipped cream dispensers, and refrigerants.

In class presentations to community members, most were a little concerned after learning that whipped cream dispensers was on this list.

It is not the whipped cream that creates a high, it is the propellant or gas inside the container that pushes out the whipped cream that is used to obtain a high.

The whipped cream from a canister is still safe to use on your desserts.

Now that you are aware how this product can be misused, everyone can be extra cautious.

It is often the common things that we tend to overlook and disregard, because we are not informed. Once you know how it can be misused, you are then aware of the danger of product misuse or abuse.

Nitrites often are considered a special class of inhalants.

Unlike most other inhalants, which act directly on the central nervous system, nitrites act primarily to dilate blood vessels and relax the muscles.

While other inhalants are used to alter mood, nitrites are used primarily as sexual enhancers. Nitrites include cyclohexyl nitrite, isoamyl (amyl) nitrite, and isobutyl (butyl) nitrite, and are commonly known as "poppers"

or "snappers."

Amyl nitrite is used in certain diagnostic procedures and was prescribed in the past to treat some patients for heart pain. Nitrites are now prohibited by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, but can be still be found, sold in small bottles, often labeled as "video head cleaner," "room odorizer," and "leather cleaner," or "liquid aroma."

We know that the terminology is a little hard to wade through, but feel it is important that you have at least seen the words on paper, and are basically aware of what they are.

Seventh-ninth graders

Huffing, or sniffing have been occurring for many years, yet no real focus has been taken

to make community members better informed about it's use, abuse and consequences.

Research on this type of abuse indicates that inhalant abuse reaches its peak at some point between seventh through the ninth grades.

Eighth-graders also regularly report the highest rate of current, past year, and lifetime inhalant abuse. This research information is based on information obtained from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

While priority efforts continue to address drug use, primarily meth, let us not ignore the signs of other types of abuse.

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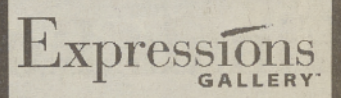
It is the intention of the Community Health Education Team (CHET) to inform community members, so that individuals are able to make positive choices for a better future for all.

Please look for future articles that will cover: Patterns of inhalant abuse; Recognizing inhalant abuse; How are inhalants used; How do inhalants produce their effects; Short and long term effects of inhalant abuse; and What are the medical consequences of inhalant abuse.

If departments, groups, or even a family would like a presentation by the CHET team, please feel free to contact: Carolyn Wewa at 553-3462 at the Family Resource Center in Warm Springs.



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