

ADULTS ONLY

A PARENT'S GUIDE:
Preventing Inhalant Misuse
Among Children and Teens



Soon after teaching our children to cross the street, it's time to start protecting them from substance use. Parents are the most powerful teachers. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is pleased to provide this guide for parents of children ages 9 to 18 on how to prevent problems with inhalants or "huffing." Elementary, middle, and high school students are all at risk, and few of them know the dangers.

Inhalants can be regular school, household, or office products that are sniffed for their mind-altering effects. They need to be taken very seriously because they can cause life-long problems or death.

This booklet will help you to:

- Choose safer products for your home.
- Teach your children about the potential dangers of household, home repair, and other products.
- Tap into free resources to support your efforts to keep your children healthy.

Consider these facts:

- Children as young as nine have tried inhalants after hearing about them from friends or adults.
- Older youth may use inhalants with other drugs or when other drugs are not available.
- You can start by talking to young children about the importance of only eating or drinking things that have been given to them by trusted adults.

This booklet is for adults only. It will help you teach your children to stay away from the dangers of inhalants. Giving your children guidance can have a powerful influence on their choices. Be sure to be clear about the rules and what will happen if they break them. It is better not to share information with your children on specific inhalants or refer to them as drugs.

To request other free pamphlets for yourself or information for youth on preventing inhalant, alcohol, and other drug misuse, contact the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse. Visit www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse or call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370). The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services offers prevention, treatment, and other services. Visit www.mass.gov/parentpower for information and contacts.

We are here to support all of your efforts to help keep your children healthy.

PARENTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW TO KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFER

























Inhalants are ordinary school, household, shop, and office products that are inhaled or sniffed for their mind-altering effects. This chart will show you examples of inhalants and some of the safer products you can use in your home, school, and office.

SOURCE OF INHALANT

GENERAL SUPPLIES	Cements, glues
	Typewriter correction fluid
	Magic markers, dry erase markers
CLEANING SUPPLIES	Any product in an aerosol can
	Aerosol air fresheners and deodorizers
	Computer cleaner (gas duster)
GARAGE	Paints, varnishes, stains, paint thinner
	Contact cement
ART SUPPLIES	Rubber cement
	Printing inks
	Spray paints, clear finishes
AUTO	Degreasers, spray lubricants, solvents, Freon [®] , brake fluid, gasoline, lacquers, lacquer thinners
HEALTH & BEAUTY	Nail polish, nail polish remover, hair spray
	Deodorants in aerosol cans
COOKING SUPPLIES	Cooking spray
	Whipping cream in aerosol cans, whipping cream cartridges (whippets)

The list of inhalants is always growing. For information on specific products or poisons, call the Regional Center for Poison Control

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

USE WATER-BASED PRODUCTS	SUPERVISE USE OF SOLVENT-BASED PRODUCTS	OTHER STRATEGIES
		
		Use correction tape
		Use low-odor markers
		Use hand pumps instead of aerosol cans
		Use solid air fresheners
		Use brush or canned carbon dioxide
		
		
		
		
		
		
		Use pump hairspray
		Use stick deodorants
		Use oil in a spray pump
		Use whipped cream in a tub or make it from scratch

and Prevention Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island at 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313).

Here's how you can help prevent inhalant misuse

- **Teach kids to read and follow the directions for use on all product labels.** Let them see you reading directions and following them. Always open a window or go outside when you use products that are suggested for use in well-ventilated areas.
- **Identify products that can be misused and treat them as poisons.** Often these will be labeled "keep out of the reach of children" or "use in a well-ventilated area." When in doubt, keep them in a locked or a safe place and don't let children use them without supervision.
- **Don't discuss specific products.** This may lead to curiosity and increased experimentation. Avoid making the connection with drugs and always stress that these products are dangerous poisons, toxins, and pollutants.
- **Be clear about the laws and your rules about inhalants, alcohol, and other substances.** Let your child know what will happen if they break your rules. Examples are included in this booklet.
- **Talk to your school principal, teachers, and health educators about safer products.**
- **Stay informed.** See the Resources section on page 13 for booklets on how to talk to your children or teens in the most powerful way. Visit www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse or call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370) to order them. Adults can also visit www.inhalantabusetraining.org for guidance as their children grow from pre-school to high school.

Keep in mind why youth use inhalants

- Inhalants are difficult to detect.
- Many children are not aware of how dangerous these products are.
- Inhalants take effect very quickly.
- Many adults are not aware of inhalants, so their use may go unnoticed.

Know the dangers of inhalant misuse

- **Breathing these gases and vapors can cause brain, nerve, kidney, and liver damage.**
- **Death can result from even one-time use.**
- **Some children have accidents, choke to death, or have heart attacks.**
- **Inhalants can be addictive. Once used on a regular basis, it is hard to stop without special help.**

If you are concerned that your child may have tried an inhalant, look for these warning signs:

- Empty product containers, especially butane lighters and aerosol cans
- Chemical soaked bags, rags, gauze, or soft drink cans
- Paint, gasoline, glue, or other strange odors

Some health or behavioral signs of inhalant misuse can include:

- **Unusual harsh breath odor**
- **A rash, blisters, or soreness around the nose, mouth, or on the lips**
- **Runny nose, sniffing, and coughing**
- **Irritated or glazed eyes and dilated pupils**
- **Nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, hallucinations, or seizures**
- **Uncontrolled laughter**
- **Agitation or sleepiness**
- **Extreme mood swings, increased irritability and anger, or violent outbursts**
- **Showing off or displaying risky behaviors**

NOTE: Some of these signs may pass quickly or indicate another health problem. If you suspect your child may have used an inhalant, get them medical attention right away.

Tips on how to talk to your child if you suspect inhalant use

- Describe signs that have led you to be concerned.
- Tell your child how much you love him/her. Say how worried you are.
- Remind your child of his/her goals, such as being on a sports team or getting a part in a play.
- Explain that using inhalants or other drugs can seriously affect their development.
- Make it clear that you and the family will seek help.

Help is available for youth and parents

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services supports outpatient counseling and residential programs for youth who are using inhalants and other substances. For information on programs, see the resources on page 13.

Paying for services

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) provides outpatient, detoxification, stabilization, and residential services for youth who are experiencing problems with substance misuse. These services are often called “treatment.” A sliding scale may be used to assess an uninsured family’s ability to provide support for treatment, but inability to pay will not be a barrier to MDPH services.

Most public and commercial insurance plans are required to offer coverage for a range of services, such as detoxification, stabilization, and outpatient services. Call your health plan or visit their website to get the information you need to obtain an assessment of your child’s situation. If you still have questions, you can refer to the resources on page 13.

For a step-by-step guide on getting your child into counseling, visit www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse or call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370) and download or request *Alcohol and Other Drugs: Is Your Teen Using?*

WHAT IF YOU FIND A PERSON IN CRISIS FROM USING INHALANTS?

- 1 Call 9-1-1.
- 2 Remain calm. Scaring or chasing the person may increase the risk of a heart attack.
- 3 Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking on vomit.
- 4 Stay with the person until emergency help arrives.
- 5 Open windows to ensure that he or she gets fresh air.
- 6 Avoid distractions and try to keep the person from moving.

For information on specific products or poisons, call the Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island at 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313), or visit www.maripoisoncenter.com.

BEWARE OF THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF PRODUCTS IN YOUR HOME

One of the greatest challenges in trying to protect your children is that many of the most dangerous inhalants are easily accessible to children at home or school. That's why it's critical to be aware of the products you purchase for your home.

For example, keep safety in mind when using computer gas dusters. They are used to blow dust and debris out of computers, keyboards, and mice. This common school, office, and household product often contains a pressurized, odorless, flammable gas that can be poisonous when intentionally inhaled.

THE WARNING LABEL OFTEN HIGHLIGHTS THIS DANGER:

"Do not deliberately concentrate and/or inhale this product. You could instantly die, suffer brain damage or other dangerous and permanent health effects. To prevent accidental or intentional misuse or abuse, keep out of the reach of children and teens."

Inhalant abuse is not just dangerous; it's a serious crime in Massachusetts. Search www.mass.gov/ for penalties and other information. This should not be taken as legal advice.

To learn more:

- Parents can learn what to say about inhalant use to children at different age levels at www.inhalantabusetraining.org.
- To learn more about preventing other types of drug misuse, visit www.mass.gov/parentpower.

RESOURCES AND PHONE NUMBERS

To prevent substance misuse, the most important steps are to set rules and talk with your children often. There are a number of resources available to help you protect your children.

Getting help

- **Youth Central Intake and Care Coordination (YCICC)**

This special state-funded service organization helps Massachusetts parents and families access treatment programs specifically for teens. YCICC is a project of the Institute for Health and Recovery. Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, except holidays 1-617-661-3991 or (toll-free) 1-866-705-2807 (TTY: 1-617-661-9051)
www.healthrecovery.org

- **Emergency Services Programs (ESP)**

Services for substance misuse and/or mental health in emergencies are available to the uninsured, MassHealth subscribers, and many insured Massachusetts residents of all ages. 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year (toll-free) 1-877-382-1609 or TTY: 1-800-249-9949
www.masspartnership.com/member/esp.aspx

- **Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline**

Information and treatment referrals are provided for youth, adults, and families. 7 days a week 1-800-327-5050 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370)
www.helpline-online.com

- **Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention
Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island**

Hotline and information about inhalants and other poisons. 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313) www.maripoisoncenter.com. For an immediate emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number.

**Other publications with information on youth
of different ages:**

These booklet and other resource titles are available free to the public. They can be requested by calling 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370). You can also order or download them at www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse.

- *Preparing Your Young Children for a Healthy, Drug-Free Future* (for parents of 3rd-5th graders)
- *Talking to Your Middle School-Aged Child about Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs* (available in English and Spanish)
- *7 Ways to Protect Your Teen from Alcohol and Other Drugs* (available in English and Spanish)
- *Inhalants Poison Your Body* (for youth)

Congratulations on taking action to protect your child from inhalants. Bringing the suggested steps into your life will take commitment. The energy you invest will pay off in a healthier future for you and your children. Keep this booklet for future reference. Order other age-appropriate information from the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse as your children grow up.

***Thank you for your help keeping
Massachusetts healthy.***

NOTES:

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