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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Building a Drug-Free Future

## Know! To Prevent Huffing, Sniffing & Bagging

What do nail polish, deodorant spray, permanent markers and correction fluid all have in common? They are all items we would expect to find in our children's bedroom or study area, right? They certainly are not products that would signal a red flag or cause us to question their use - nor should they necessarily. However, each of these items are also common "inhalants" with the potential to harm.

According to the *2015 Monitoring The Future Study*, nearly one in ten American children give inhalants a try by the time they reach eighth grade. Some refer to inhalants as "kids' drugs," because they are the only class of substance abused more by children and younger adolescents than by older teens, with the majority of users being 11 to 14 years old. But don't let this fool you into believing inhalants are innocent kid's play - they are not.

### What exactly are inhalants and why are they so popular among younger children?

Inhalants are chemical vapors (gases or fumes) that are breathed in for the purpose of getting high. The slang terms are **huffing** (inhaling chemicals through the mouth), **sniffing** (snorting fumes through the nose), and **bagging** (spraying chemicals into a bag and then breathing it in). These chemicals are found in everyday products like cooking spray, nail polish remover and hair spray, which is one of the reasons inhalants are popular among younger children. These products are readily accessible at home and school; they are legal products that can be purchased by children without drawing attention; they are inexpensive; they are easy to conceal; they don't require paraphernalia; and youth do not generally realize the dangers inhalants pose.

The truth is inhalants ARE dangerous. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), inhalants negatively impact the brain and can cause children to experience difficulties with learning, remembering, problem-solving and paying attention – negatively impacting their school performance as well. In addition, inhalants effect the circulatory and respiratory systems, sometimes triggering severe headaches, irregular heart rhythm, decreased rate of breathing and loss of consciousness.

Furthermore, inhalants can be deadly. Far too often, fatalities occur from sudden sniffing death, suffocation and choking, which can happen even

on first use. And, as with any drug abuse, accidents can occur due to inhalant intoxication, resulting in serious injury or death.

### **How can you protect your children from inhalant use?**

Storing cleaning products and such out of reach of young children is good prevention practice. However, there are more than 1,400 household and commercial products that contain chemicals used as inhalants, therefore it is unrealistic to think you can prevent this type of abuse among older children by hiding or keeping track of every chemical product in your home. What you are encouraged to do instead, is include this important topic in your regular and ongoing conversations with your children. Statistics show that a child is 50% less likely to try an inhalant if an adult has spoken to them about the dangers of inhalant abuse – so **Start Talking** today!

For more information and additional resources on inhalants, please visit <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/inhalants>.

Sources: [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\): Inhalants](#). [NIDA for Teens. Drug Facts: Inhalants](#). [National Inhalant Prevention Coalition](#). [Virginia Dept. of Education: Inhalant Prevention Resource Guide](#). [Alliance for Consumer Education: National Inhalants & Poisons Awareness Week\(NIPAW\) 2016](#).

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