



## Inhaling the Future: The Urgent Need to Address Drug Inhalation

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### DESCRIPTION

The use of inhaled drugs, a practice that often lurks in the shadows of the broader drug abuse landscape, is a growing concern that warrants attention. As society grapples with the opioid crisis, marijuana legalization, and other high-profile drug issues, the dangers associated with drug inhalation often go under-reported and misunderstood. In this commentary, we shed light on the practice of drug inhalation, its risks, and the need for a comprehensive response. Drug inhalation, also known as “huffing” or “sniffing,” refers to the act of inhaling chemical substances to achieve a psychoactive effect. These substances can range from everyday household products like glue, paint thinner, aerosol sprays, and gasoline to volatile chemicals like nitrous oxide, also known as “laughing gas.” The appeal of inhalants lies in their accessibility, low cost, and the misconception that they are relatively less dangerous than other illicit substances. However, the risks associated with inhalants are both severe and immediate. One of the most alarming aspects of drug inhalation is the prevalence of its use among young people. Adolescents and teenagers are particularly vulnerable to experimenting with inhalants due to their accessibility, the lack of a social stigma, and the misconception that they are a safe way to get high. What makes this practice even more concerning is that inhalant abuse is often a gateway to more serious drug use, potentially leading to a cycle of addiction and long-term health consequences. The effects of inhalants on the human body are rapid, typically lasting only a few minutes. Users may experience a range of short-lived sensations, including euphoria, dizziness, hallucinations, and a sense of detachment from reality. However, these fleeting moments of pleasure come at an enormous cost. The risks associated with inhalant use include nausea, vomiting, disorientation, loss of consciousness, seizures, and, in the worst cases, fatal heart arrhythmias

or asphyxiation due to the displacement of oxygen in the lungs.

Efforts to combat drug inhalation must also include the development of effective treatment and support systems. Inhalant addiction often co-occurs with underlying mental health issues, and comprehensive care is crucial to help individuals break free from the cycle of abuse. Access to appropriate treatment resources should be expanded, ensuring that those affected receive the help they need. The issue of drug inhalation is not confined to a single geographic region. It is a global concern, and in many countries, particularly in areas where resources for addiction treatment are scarce, addressing inhalant abuse presents an even greater challenge. International collaboration is crucial to sharing best practices and tackling this issue comprehensively.

Drug inhalation is a practice that poses a hidden danger to individuals, families, and communities. To address this issue effectively, it is imperative that we raise public awareness, develop and expand prevention programs, increase access to treatment, and tighten regulations on substances commonly abused through inhalation. By shining a light on this often-overlooked problem, we can begin to reduce its impact and create safer and healthier environments where individuals can thrive without the risks associated with drug inhalation. Ignoring this issue is not an option; it's time to take action and protect our most vulnerable members of society.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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