



Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

How Inhalant Abuse Affects the Body.....

Short Term Effects...

- ◆ Once inhaled, fumes go from the nose to the bloodstream and quickly affect the heart, lungs and brain.
- ◆ Unlike most drugs or regular food, inhalants do not travel first through the digestive system, or through the kidneys and liver where they can be filtered out of the blood. Instead, they move quickly from the lungs and heart into the bloodstream.
- ◆ The chemical nature of inhalants causes them to concentrate in the central nervous system- the body's computer and information highway.
- ◆ This speedy movement into the central nervous system explains why inhalants have an almost immediate effect on users.
- ◆ Inhalants punish our internal organs, causing the heart and lungs to work irregularly. They can cause fatal heart attacks.
- ◆ Users usually experience a short high that lasts from a few moments to half an hour. They may feel dizzy, giddy or clumsy. They may slur their speech, lose their sense of judgement or get aggressive.
- ◆ The short high is followed by a long "downer" of pain and discomfort.
After-effects of inhalants include:
 - ⊗ Nosebleeds ⊗ Bad breath ⊗ Dizziness ⊗ Nausea ⊗ Lack of appetite ⊗ Drooling ⊗ Weak muscles ⊗ Bad coordination ⊗ Headache ⊗ Sores on mouth and nose ⊗ Slow reflexes ⊗ Sensitivity to light.

Long Term Effects.....

- ◆ Inhalants are poisons that weaken the body and can eventually kill the user.
- ◆ It takes ten days for inhalant chemicals to clear out of the body's systems. Repeated use means that these toxic chemicals can build up in the central nervous system and cause serious damage.
- ◆ There are various levels of damage:
 - ⊗ Mood swings and lack of energy.
 - ⊗ Personality changes, memory loss, attention/thinking problems.
 - ⊗ Severe brain damage. Effects may be permanent.
- ◆ Long-term use may cause severe damage to lungs, kidneys, liver, heart, blood, immune system and senses.
- ◆ The most severe effect of inhalant abuse is death, which can happen after only one use. Death by inhalants has many forms:
 - ⊗ Sudden sniffing death caused by irregular heartbeat.
 - ⊗ Breathing stops because the lungs can't get any oxygen.
 - ⊗ Suffocating with plastic bags.
 - ⊗ Choking on vomit.

Information adapted from **BE A PREVENTION PLAYER**: A Resource for Inhalant Abuse Prevention Education published by the Indian-Metis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg, Inc.

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