

Inhalant Misuse

Why solvents, gases and aerosols can cause serious harm even with occasional use

Substance misuse can develop quietly. A substance may begin as a way to cope, sleep, socialise, manage pain, increase confidence or get through difficult feelings. This guide is here to help you notice patterns with curiosity rather than judgement.

What inhalants include

Inhalants can include volatile solvents, aerosols and gases inhaled for intoxication. Products may be ordinary household or industrial substances, but that does not make inhalation safe.

Why risk can be immediate

Inhalants can affect the heart, brain, breathing and coordination. Serious injury can occur unexpectedly, including after relatively limited exposure.

Warning signs

Chemical smells, stained clothing, headaches, dizziness, poor coordination, secrecy around aerosols or solvents, or unexplained changes in behaviour may warrant concern.

What to do

Avoid confrontation while the person is intoxicated and seek medical help for collapse, breathing difficulty, seizures or severe confusion. Ongoing use needs professional substance-misuse support.

A gentle check-in

Ask yourself: What does this substance do for me? What happens before I use it? What happens afterwards? What has become harder because of it? What support would make change feel more possible?

Notice	Consider
Triggers, cravings, quantity, secrecy, sleep, mood and consequences.	GP support, local drug/alcohol services, counselling, trusted people and practical harm-reduction advice.

Important safety note

This resource is educational and does not replace medical assessment. Some substances can cause dangerous withdrawal or overdose. If there is unconsciousness, severe breathing difficulty, seizure, collapse, chest pain or immediate danger, seek emergency medical help.

You deserve support that looks at the whole person - not just the substance.