



# Center for Behavioral Health Studies



## Inhalant Abuse Increases Adolescent Behavior Problems

An estimated two million teenagers in the United States have sniffed or inhaled a substance. **Inhalants most often abused include: glue, gasoline, solvents, nitrous oxide and spray paint.**

Added to this list are many inhalants found in common household products, such as nail polish remover, cleaning fluids, toxic marking pens, and lighter fluid.

Most young people who engage in this dangerous practice give it up over a short period of time. However, small numbers of teens go on to develop serious problems with inhalants and a high probability of permanently damaging their health. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) clearly shows that the **youths who progress to regular inhalant abuse also have many other behavioral health problems.**

### Study Design

This particular study analyzed data on 36,859 teens aged 12 to 17 from the combined 2000 and 2001 Survey on Drug Abuse. Adolescents with an inhalant abuse diagnosis were more likely than others to have abused these drugs by age 13 or 14, and to also have abused other drugs besides inhalants.

**Inhalant abusing youths also were found more likely to have serious co-existing problems.** Difficulties included a history of delinquent acts including: stealing, fighting, and carrying a handgun.

According to Mona Sumner, Chief Operations Officer at Rimrock Foundation, **“these results suggest more work is needed to identify the sequence of behaviors involved in inhalant use disorders.”**

### Research Findings

Inhalant abuse most often appears to occur among adolescents who are older than 13, residents of rural areas or who have a multi-ethnic heritage.

#### Adolescent Inhalant Abuse

Probability of Dependence Disorder	Times More Likely to Abuse
Age of first inhalant abuse, 13-14	5
Weekly inhalant abuse	4
Use two or more drugs	12
Use of mental health services	4

**What was surprising is girls were just as likely as boys to have abused inhalants and have similar problem behaviors associated with these drugs.**

Past studies have shown that boys' overall have had a higher likelihood of involvement with drugs because of more frequent exposure. **Inhalants may be an exception because boys and girls seem to have the same level of access to them.**

**“The kids who abuse inhalants seem to have other drugs of abuse, emotional difficulties and delinquent behaviors - - -”**

**--- Mona L. Sumner, COO  
Rimrock Foundation**

Summary

**A**dolescents with an inhalant abuse disorder make up a sub-group of highly troubled youth with multiple disorders. Lifetime inhalant abuse amongst eighth graders has increased from 15.8 to 17.3 percent from a year ago.

Inhalants act on the same brain areas and neurotransmitter systems as cocaine, amphetamines, and other addictive drugs.

This data suggests we need to highlight the dangers of inhalants in media messages and national prevention programs.

Understanding inhalant abuse and identifying young people with inhalant problems are essential ingredients in drug prevention programs.

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For further information on Rimrock Foundation's treatment of inhalant abuse, call Jen Porter, Admissions Supervisor, at 1-800-227-3953 or 1-406-248-3175, or visit our Website at [www.rimrock.org](http://www.rimrock.org). For more educational information on inhalant abuse, contact the Rimrock Foundation Library at the above numbers.