

KNOW YOUR STUFF

VOLATILE SUBSTANCES

AKA: individual substances such as glue, gas, lighter fluid, aerosols



WHAT ARE THEY?

Gases or chemicals that evaporate at room temperature to form a vapour. These are found in many different everyday products that are safe when used for the purpose for which they have been designed and within the manufacturers' instructions. Some examples include nail polish remover, petrol, some glues, and butane/propane gas in cigarette lighters and aerosols. When misused, these are inhaled so are sometimes referred to by a word that describes this behaviour, eg. huffing, sniffing, or a slang term such as chroming, tooting or dusting.

THE HIGHS

Feeling different physically, mentally and emotionally (similar to the effects of alcohol), sometimes with hallucinations.

THE LOWS

Because many volatile substances are household products, there can be a sense that they are harmless, when in fact they can be fatal – and this can be unpredictable and sudden, happening on the first time of use, or to someone who has engaged in the behaviour many times before. Death can result from someone choking on their vomit, suffocating, or their heart stopping – this is called Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, and can happen to anyone, whether it is the first time or they have done it many times before.

Other issues when volatile substances are used as drugs can include severe burns, having an accident due to impaired judgement and mobility, vomiting, blackouts, mood swings (including aggression), a runny nose and irritated throat, watering eyes, headaches, and rashes on the face. Some people who have used volatile substances repeatedly experience damage to their brain, lungs, liver and kidneys, while others report slower reaction times, slurred speech and mental health problems. This varies according to the substance being used, and how much... and a big issue is that it is very difficult to control the dose.

Some users build up tolerance to volatile substances, meaning they end up using more to experience the same effects as they did previously. It is also possible to become dependent, meaning they feel compelled to keep using the drug, even though they know it is bad for them. They may also develop withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, mood swings and anxiety. Mixing is a problem with any drug, and volatile substances are no exception, making the effects and risks even more unpredictable and potentially harmful.

Misusing volatile substances can lead to antisocial or violent behaviours which may lead to criminality (such as assault) and prosecution. It is also illegal and dangerous to drive under the influence of any drug, including a volatile substance. There are laws controlling the sale of certain products to young people, and retailers who flout these restrictions can be in serious trouble.



For more information go to:

Re-Solv

Overcoming gas and solvent use

<https://www.re-solv.org/>



DSM foundation

The drug education charity

www.dsmfoundation.org.uk

The Wellbeing Hub

— from Teen Tips —



www.teentips.co.uk