

# INHALANTS

## **FACTS**

Inhalants are breathable chemicals that produce psychoactive (mind-altering) vapours. People do not usually think of inhalants as drugs because most of them were never meant to be used that way. They include solvents, aerosols, some anaesthetics, and other chemicals such as glue, nail polish remover, lighter and cleaning fluids, and gasoline. From the ESPAD report conducted in 1999 in 16 European countries, it came out that 16.24% of Maltese 16-year-olds abused inhalants at least once.

## **EFFECTS**

The effects are similar to feeling drunk; the user feels thick headed, dizzy, giggly and dreamy.

The effects are felt immediately and some users become intoxicated before they realise it.

The user may hallucinate (see or hear things which aren't real).

The user may engage in sudden violent behaviour, hurting himself and the people around in the process.

### **Inhalants affect your brain.**

Because they affect your brain with much greater speed and force than many other substances, they can cause irreversible physical and mental damage before you know what's happened.

### **Inhalants affect your heart.**

Inhalants starve the body of oxygen and force the heart to beat irregularly and more rapidly – that can be dangerous for your body.

### **Inhalants damage other parts of your body.**

People who use inhalants can lose their sense of smell; experience nausea and nosebleeds; and develop liver, lung and kidney problems. Chronic use can lead to muscle wasting and reduced muscle tone and strength.

### **Inhalants can cause sudden deaths.**

Inhalants can kill you instantly. Inhalant users can die by suffocation, choking on their vomit, or having a heart attack.

## **RISKS**

Gases and solvents can cause instant death, even on the first go.

Some users squirt gases and aerosols directly down the throat. This is a particularly dangerous way of taking the drug.

There is a risk of suffocation if the substance is inhaled from a plastic bag over the head.

Accidents can happen when the user is high because their senses are affected.

## **KNOW THE SIGNS**

### **How can you tell if a friend is using inhalants?**

Sometimes it is difficult to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be abusing inhalants.

- Slurred speech
- Drunk, dizzy, or dazed appearance
- Unusual breath odour
- Chemical smell on clothing
- Red eyes
- Runny nose

### **What can you do to help someone who is using inhalants?**

Be a real friend. Save a life. Encourage your friend to seek professional help. If you are using inhalants yourself – stop! The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life. It's never too late. Do it today!