

VSA and the Law...

It is not illegal to use solvents. In England and Wales it is illegal to 'knowingly' sell solvents for the purpose of inhalation. It is illegal to sell petrol and spray paint to under 16s or lighter fluid to under 18s. Driving under the influence of any drug is illegal and can result in prosecution.

How can I help

If you are with someone who is under the influence of a solvent, Keep calm and stay with them if it is safe for you to do so. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation, open windows, loosen tight clothing etc. Keep the user calm and still as they could develop breathing difficulties. Stay with them until the effects wear off. If they are struggling to breath or breathing becomes difficult then call 999.



If you would like further information on VSA please visit,

www.talktofrank.com/drugs/vsa

Or call **FRANK 0800 77 66 00**



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For information on Cannabis, Alcohol or other drugs please see our other publications including Reducing the Risks of Snorting.



Young People's Drug & Alcohol
Service for West Berkshire



VSA

Volatile Substance
Abuse

Glues, gases and aerosols

What are solvents

Solvents are substances such as glue, lighter fluid, petrol and aerosols that are breathed or sniffed to get 'high'. They are depressants, which means they slow down your brain and body's responses.

Anything that gives off a vapour can potentially be abused in this way. It is estimated that the average household contains 40 Volatile Substances. As with all substances, solvents should not be used with alcohol.

How are they used

The vapour or gas that forms a solvent is inhaled through the mouth or nose and in turn into the bloodstream to get 'high'. Aerosols are sometimes sprayed onto a cloth before inhaling and plastic bags may be used to sniff glue, increasing the risk of suffocation.

Many Solvents are flammable therefore there is a risk of burns and explosions, especially if someone is smoking nearby or if in an enclosed space.

Who uses them...

The majority of users are aged between 12-16 years old.

Most users experiment with solvents on a one off basis for a short time. A small number of people use on a regular or long term basis.

What are the effects

The effects of solvents vary depending on what you use and how much. Users feel drowsy and unsteady on their feet. Some effects include vomiting, nausea, dizziness and black outs. Feelings of being drunk with dizziness, dreaminess, giggling and not being able to think straight. Users can also experience mood swings, rash around the mouth and nose, aggressive behavior and hallucinations.

Inhalation causes the drug to take effect very rapidly, causing a euphoric rush. The effects wear off quickly within 30-40 minutes.



What are the problems associated with taking them

Your judgement can be seriously affected when high so there's a real danger you could do something dangerous.

Squirting gas products directly into the throat is very dangerous. This can make the throat swell resulting in not being able to breathe which can slow down your heart and cause a heart attack.

There is a real risk of passing out and choking on their own vomit. You risk suffocation if you inhale from a plastic bag over your head. Long-term abuse could damage the muscles, liver and kidneys. Very long term use could cause a lasting impairment of brain function (especially affecting how the brain controls body movement).

Getting the dose right can be difficult: If you take too much it could result in a coma or death. Come downs include hangover, feeling tired and depressed.