

## **MESSAGES TO GIVE YOUTH ABOUT INHALANTS**

### **If your child or children are 4-5 years old:**

- You can play a game, "Is this product safe to smell or touch?"
- Encourage them to ask you if they have questions about safety.
- Teach by example; show that you use products according to the directions.
- Tell your children that they should only eat or smell foods or liquids that you or a care-giver give them.
- Remind them not to eat or smell anything given to them by a stranger.
- Do not provide them with scented markers. Even though scented markers are water-based and may not be harmful to smell, they encourage children to smell markers.

### **If your child or children are 6-10 years old:**

- The main message is to use products safely; we want to keep products from getting into our bodies.
- Teach by example, show your children that you read labels and use products according to the directions
- Remind them that if they do not use a product safely, it can pollute or poison their bodies.
- Show them which products can only be used when an adult is present.
- Make sure you have already taught them the facts suggested for younger children.
- Monitor your children's activities and get to know their friends.
- Do not provide them with scented markers. Even though scented markers are water-based and may not be harmful to smell, they encourage children to smell markers.

### **If your child or children are 11 -14 years old:**

- All children need messages about poison prevention and product safety:
  - We should read and follow directions on product labels.
  - Poisons get into the body by swallowing, breathing, and through the skin. So we should avoid breathing fumes.
- In addition, ask your children what they have heard about inhalants, "huffing", or "sniffing." Sometimes children misunderstand what you are talking about at this age. We are not talking about asthma inhalers, things that are smoked like cigarettes or marijuana, or strong smelling bleach or ammonia cleaners.
- If they talk about inhalants as drugs, then emphasize the fact that inhalants are really poisons, pollutants and fire hazards. At this age,

- avoid teaching them about the drug-like effects of inhalants if they don't already know about it.
- Talk to them about avoiding damaging and polluting their bodies by sniffing or huffing.
  - Tell them some of the serious effects of abusing products:
    - Damage to brain, liver, lungs, kidneys
    - Loss of memory, thinking ability and smell
    - Death, even from one-time use
  - Tell them about some of the short-term effects of abusing products
    - Sores on the face
    - Smells on the body
    - Accidents, explosions and fires
  - Teach them how to deal with peer pressure. You can even practice with them how to say, "No, thanks."
  - Let them know they can ask or call you whenever safety is an issue.
  - They should never ride in a car with someone who has used an inhalant or any other drug.
  - Be clear about your family's rules about not using inhalants or other substances and what the consequences will be (including an alcohol and drug assessment).

**If your child or children are 15-18 years old:**

- By this age, almost all children will know about inhalants being used as drugs, but they may not understand that inhalants are really poisons, toxins, pollutants and fire and explosion hazards. Make sure they get this message. These products were never meant to be put into the body.
- Be clear about your family's rules about inhalants and other substances and what the consequences of use will be, including a mandatory alcohol and drug assessment.
- Set up an open dialogue about your interest in keeping them on track and healthy.
- Review how inhalants can get in the way of their hopes and dreams.
- Describe how inhalants can cause death the 1st, 10th or 100th time they are used.
- Highlight the short-term negative effects on relationships with family and friends.
- Emphasize that inhalants interfere with school and learning.
- Remain open to questions and calls if your teen needs a ride to avoid riding with someone who has used an inhalant, alcohol or other drugs.

New England Inhalant Prevention Coalition <http://www.inhalantprevention.org/>

Training at <http://www.inhalantabusetraining.org/>