



Suicide & Inhalants: Know the facts

March 15th – 21st, 2009 marks National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week (NIPAW). Around this time many concerned persons in communities around the nation hold special programs in schools, town halls, or open dialogue in their own households to raise awareness about inhalant abuse. So, what does NIPAW have to do with suicide prevention? Well, studies have shown that there was a 239% increase in the percentage of inhalant-related suicides!

Did you know there is 1 suicide every 16 minutes and 89 suicides per day? Did you know 1 in every 5 children in the U.S. will abuse an inhalant by the time they reach 8th grade? Do you know what inhalant abuse is? Make sure to know the facts on suicide prevention and inhalant abuse prevention to raise awareness in your home, community or business during and after NIPAW.

Suicide Prevention:

1. Know the facts... More than 32,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year. Youth suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for 10-14 and 15-24 years olds according to 2005 Centers for Disease Control information.

2. What can you do?... A friend, family member, or co-worker can be the first step to preventing suicide by providing someone with the help and support they need! Be willing to talk to someone about whatever emotional problems they may be experiencing as well as depression, bipolar and anxiety disorders and suicide. Research shows that asking someone if they are thinking about suicide *does not* put that thought into their head. It's not that hard! Begin a dialogue with someone you are concerned about by asking questions about what they are thinking or feeling. Next, get involved by encouraging the person to seek some form of help immediately (utilize your local resources). You can help them in finding a knowledgeable mental/chemical health professional or treatment facility in your area, and go with them to provide support and/or advocate on their behalf.

3. Watch for the warning signs... Below is an easy way to remember what to look for if you think someone may be at risk:

I- Ideation
S- Substance Abuse

P- Purposelessness
A- Anxiety
T- Trapped
H- Hopelessness

W- Withdrawal
A- Anger
R- Recklessness
M- Mood Change



4. Never keep a secret that a friend or loved one might be thinking about suicide. It is better to save a life and lose a friendship, so don't worry about risking a friendship if you truly feel a life is in danger. Don't inject your opinion of a person's situation and try to minimize problems or shame a person into changing their mind. Instead, reassure them that help is available; problems and issues leading to suicidal thoughts often can be treated effectively. Suicidal feelings are temporary, suicide is forever!

Inhalant Abuse Prevention:

1. Know the facts... More than 1 in 5 kids will abuse an inhalant by the time they reach 8th grade. Inhalant abuse refers to the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of common products found in homes and communities with the purpose of "getting high." Different inhalants produce different harmful effects, and regular abuse of these substances can result in serious harm to vital organs (i.e. liver and kidney damage, limb spasms, bone marrow and central nervous system damage) or death. There are more than 1,400 products which are potentially dangerous when abused, such as typewriter correction fluid, air conditioning coolant, gasoline, felt tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, computer duster, butane, cooking spray, paint, and glue to name a few. Most are ordinary products that can be found in the home, garage, office, school or as close as the local convenience store.

2. What can you do?... Like suicide prevention it's important to educate yourself on the issue first, in order to then open dialogue with others. If you or someone you know is currently abusing inhalants, please seek professional help immediately!

3. Watch for the warning signs... Inhalant Abusers may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms:

Hidden chemical-soaked rags or clothes in room, locker, office, etc.
Eyes and nose red or runny; spots and/or sores around the mouth
Loss of appetite or nausea
Paint or chemical odor or stains on face or fingers

Other symptoms may include (but not limited to): Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearance; slurred or disoriented speech; Uncoordinated physical symptoms; Chronic Inhalant Abusers may exhibit symptoms such as hallucinations, anxiety, excitability, irritability, restlessness or anger.

4. Never keep an inhalant abuser's activities a secret! If you catch someone inhaling, do not excite, scare shock or stress the individual as this may lead to "Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome" (when the heart begins to overwork, beating quickly and unevenly, which can lead to cardiac arrest).



Additional resources: Every child deserves a chance to be happy. Here's your chance to help make that happen!

For more information on Suicide Prevention, please check out:

- National Council for Suicide Prevention: www.ncsponline.org
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: www.sprc.org

For more information on Inhalant Abuse Prevention, please check out:

- Alliance for Consumer Education: www.inhalant.org
- National Inhalant Prevention Coalition: www.inhalants.org
- Office of National Drug Control Policy: www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/inhalants/index.html
- Partnership for a Drug-Free America: www.drugfree.org/portal/drug_guide/inhalants
- Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: <http://dasis3.samhsa.gov>