

VOLATILE SUBSTANCES

History	<p>There is a very extensive list of products that have been used ranging from ether and nitrous oxide (especially popular in Victorian times and amongst medical students) through to petrol, shoe dyes and some fire extinguishers. Inhalant use was associated with the punk movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, with one prominent fanzine of the time being titled 'Sniffin' Glue'. Most used are products containing butane or toluene.</p>
Street name	<p>Solvents; inhalers; glue; gas; tolly; huff; aerosols; glue sniffing.</p>
Type	
Drug Effect	<p>Users experience sensations akin to being drunk – disorientated, giddy and dizzy. Nausea may be present. With continued use users may experience heart palpitations and a range of psychological effects including paranoia, anxiety and visual and auditory hallucinations. Effects last 15 – 30 minutes and users may be left with hangover like symptoms.</p>
Dependency	<p>Tolerance builds up quickly and some degree of psychological dependence is evident.</p>
Description	<p>Depends entirely on which products are being used – lighter refills, hairsprays, adhesives, cleaning products, paint thinners etc.</p>
Street use	<p>Solids are inhaled from a small bag placed over the nose and mouth. Liquids are usually poured onto a rag and the fumes inhaled. Gases can be sprayed in the room and inhaled. A more dangerous practice is to spray directly into the mouth, most frequently done with butane lighter refills.</p>
Withdrawal	<p>Withdrawal symptoms reported are similar to alcohol including headache and irritability.</p>
Long term use	<p>Squirting gas products down the throat is a particularly dangerous way of taking the drug. It can make your throat swell so you can't breathe, it can slow down your heart and can cause a heart attack. And some users die from passing out and choking on their own vomit. Long-term abuse of solvents has been shown to damage the brain, muscles, liver and kidneys. Impaired judgement can lead to accidents and there is a risk of sudden death from asphyxiation, heart failure, fire. Mixing gases, glues and aerosols with alcohol poses an increased risk of death.</p>
Overdose	<p>It can be hard to get the amount right. Just enough will give the desired high</p>

– a little too much can result in coma.

Legal Status

Volatile substances aren't illegal, but this doesn't mean that they are safe to use. Under Scottish law you can be prosecuted for 'recklessly' selling substances to any age group if you suspect they're going to inhale them.

It is illegal to sell petrol to anyone under the age of 16 or to supply gas lighter refills to anyone under the age of 18. This applies to the whole of the UK.