

CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS



Age of Onset

- Often first substance used before marijuana and cocaine. In fact, inhalant use often appears before onset of tobacco or alcohol use.
- Experimental use onset in late childhood & early adolescence, use patterns are short lived, with cessation in late adolescence
- Chronic use appears in early & late adolescence

Fast and Multiple Intoxication

- Users can get high several times over a short period because inhalants are short-acting with a rapid onset
- Attractive to children who don't like delayed gratification

Poor School Attendance

- Drop-outs
- Absenteeism
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Delinquency

- Particularly theft and burglary
- Inhalant users are more disruptive, deviant or delinquent than other drug users

Ethnic Membership

- Users are predominately white
- Minority involvement is concentrated in American and Canadian Native American Indians; and, Low income Hispanics

Gender

- Experimental use equally common in males, females
- Chronic use most common in males
- Morbidity and mortality more common among chronic male users
- Some male homosexuals (limited to nitrites)

High Exposure Occupational Settings

- Adults in certain high-exposure occupational settings (e.g., painters)

High Exposure Professions

- Adult medical workers (e.g., anesthesiologist, dentist)

Use of Multiple Inhalants

- Exposure to solvent mixtures either in occupational or abuse settings is far more common than exposure to a single solvent.

Use of Other Drugs

Multiple Personal and Social Problems

Poor Adjustment to Work Environments

Multiproblem and Disrupted Families

Varied Socioeconomic Conditions

- Impoverished, marginal or ghetto situations
- Middle to Upper Income

Parental Alcohol/Drug Abuse

Weakened Parental Influence

- Some parents do not discourage their child's use of inhalants
- Some parents have low sanctions against inhalant use by peers of their children

Poor School Performance and Adjustment

- Attention deficit; poor short term memory
- Low abstraction and judgement scores
- Lower grades

Lower Intelligence Scores (verbal & performance)

Psychopathology

- Users seeking treatment have high rates of psychopathology, especially conduct disorders and personality disorders
- More psychopathology in those who use when they are alone
- Antisocial personality
- Depressive disorder

Emotional Problems

- More emotional problems than other drug users or non-drug users (especially anxiety, depression and anger)

Weak or Negative-Future Orientations

- Users have dismal or no future orientations;uncertain whether or not the future is worth waiting for.

Low Self Esteem

High Adolescent Rebellion

Strong Peer Drug Influence

- Peers have high inhalant and drug use
- Peers have high deviance behaviors
- Peer cluster theory

Special Setting

- Prisons
- Boarding Schools

Acculturation Stress

Criminal Justice System Involvement

- More family members in prison

Source: *"Understanding the Inhalant User,"* Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse