

Inhalants

Drug Information;

Inhalants, or volatile solvents, are substances, whose vapours when inhaled cause you to feel intoxicated or "high". Inhalants are depressants which slow down the activity of the brain and central nervous system. The effect can be immediate and may last for several hours depending on the substance and amount used and the method of inhalation. Some of the most common inhalants are chrome-based paint ("chroming"), aerosol spray cans, glue, gas from lighters or barbecues (butane), petrol, paint, paint thinner and felt-tipped pens.

Effects on Pregnancy;

Inhalants contain many toxic substances which are harmful to both you and your baby. It is believed that nearly all inhalants cross the placenta and enter the baby's blood stream. For this reason, it is important you cease using inhalants during pregnancy.

Some of the known effects on the baby are early delivery, breathing problems and an increased risk of infection. It is also suggested that the unborn baby can experience periods of reduced oxygen, which can affect brain development. This has the potential to impact on a child's life long learning ability.

Counselling;

Pregnancy is often a good motivator to cease inhalant use. Drug and alcohol counselling can help you understand the reasons why you are using inhalants. It can also assist you to reduce or stop your use during pregnancy. Counselling will also assist you in accessing appropriate support services such as outpatient and/or residential drug and alcohol services.

Pregnancy Care;

Discussing inhalant use whilst you are pregnant might be difficult, however it is important that you talk to a health worker, midwife, doctor or someone you can trust to help you with your concerns.

Regular pregnancy care is important to ensure you are healthy and your baby is growing well.

You may need dietary supplements such as iron and calcium throughout your pregnancy. All women should take folate before conceiving and for at least the first three months of their pregnancy.

Nausea, vomiting and constipation commonly occur in pregnancy. Speak with your midwife or doctor - they may refer you to a dietician.

Eating well during pregnancy and whilst you are breastfeeding is important for the health of you and your baby.

Breastfeeding;

The effect of inhaling volatile substances during breastfeeding has not been fully researched. Whilst major quantities of inhalants probably do not pass through breast milk, breast feeding whilst affected by your inhalants is not safe and not recommended.

Infant Development

With the exception of alcohol, it is very difficult to prove that drug use in pregnancy results in any permanent long term behavioral or learning problems in children as they grow up.

Most research suggests that if a child is raised in a caring and supportive family environment, they will do as well at school as any other child in similar circumstances. However, alcohol consumption during pregnancy is a very different problem. Evidence suggests that regular daily consumption of more than one standard drink per day during pregnancy may result in obvious behavioral and learning problems in children that can persist into adult life. The more alcohol that is consumed during pregnancy, the more likely it is that the child will experience significant long term learning and behavioral problems.

The combined use of alcohol and drugs, particularly cannabis and cocaine, is an especially high risk situation.