



Provided by **Re-Solv**, the national expert organisation working to prevent death and harm associated with the abuse or misuse of solvents, gases and glues.

A WEE SKOOSH

Pupil FAQs

HOW DO PEOPLE DIE – WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY?

About 70% of solvent abuse deaths are due to heart failure. Solvent abuse makes the heart becomes oversensitive to adrenaline, which can cause it to stop beating suddenly. This can be at the time of abusing solvents or even hours later, after the 'buzz' has long worn off. Think about just how dangerous that is. Someone can 'buzz' for a few minutes in the morning, then hours later run for a bus and their heart stops beating.

WHAT IS ADRENALINE?

The adrenal glands produce adrenaline, often called the 'fight or flight' hormone. Adrenaline is felt in the body if you get a fright, or are excited or even if you drink too much coffee. A lot of different food and drink can cause an increase in adrenaline. Some medications cause adrenaline increase (Ritalin for example). Very important to be aware that the more adrenaline surging round the body, the more risk of heart failure from solvent abuse. BUT heart failure can occur from even normal, existing levels of adrenaline – there does not have to be an increase or a surge.

CAN THE LUNGS OR THROAT FREEZE?

This is a common misconception but is not true. Death from suffocation can happen, but this is when a plastic bag is used over the head or choking on vomit.



WHAT IN SOLVENTS IS SO DANGEROUS?

Around 1500 easily available products are used with the average home containing about 30 such products. Gases have been the most common products of abuse in recent times, with aerosol abuse particularly associated with young people. It is the propellant in the aerosol which is abused and gives the effect. Propellant gases are butane, propane and isobutene. Butane is the gas used in Cigarette Lighter Refills which cannot be sold to under 18 year olds.

Other products used in solvent abuse include petrol, nail polish remover and a variety of solvent based products. Laughing Gas is also becoming increasingly popular as a party and festival drug.

Gluesniffing was more common in the 80s and 90s. Some glue sniffing still occurs but it is now commercial and industrial glue rather than consumer glues which are used. Consumer glues were reformulated in 2006 to remove the chemical – toluene – responsible for hundreds of deaths.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET THE STUFF OUT OF THE CONTAINER?

Some people spray onto towels and rags and hold these to the face, other spray into plastic bags and sniff from these or place bags over their heads. Others spray directly into the mouth. Young children have even tried to pierce aerosol cans, which can and does cause explosions and massive body burns.

Note: For staff information only. Re-Solv do not advise sharing this information with primary age pupils.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE BUZZ? HAVE HEARD ABOUT HALLUCINATIONS?

This can happen, and these can be funny or very frightening. Effect is like being very drunk very quickly – this effect wears off very quickly too.

WHY DO PEOPLE DO THIS?

They think it will be a good effect, a laugh, or someone dares them to try it. But the effect can be very frightening and never forget it can kill on the very 1st try or the 100th.

HOW LONG DOES THE 'BUZZ' LAST?

Only a few minutes, but the danger to the heart can last for up to 24 hours later.

HOW DO PEOPLE BEHAVE WHEN THEY ARE BUZZING?

Can be aggressive, act crazy, think they see or hear things. A lot of crimes are committed when someone has been abusing solvents, including murders, fires, rapes.

HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS BUZZED?

Get help straight away. Don't argue or excite them, don't chase them or make them run.

WHAT TREATMENT WILL THEY GET?

Hospital treatment is often observation only.

WHAT IF THEY ARE UNCONSCIOUS?

Place them in the recovery position, get help, stay with them **but only if it is safe for you to do so.**

CAN THE FUMES ESCAPE INTO THE ROOM?

Yes – gases and solvents are exhaled virtually unchanged. The combustion risks are extreme. The Glasgow School of Art fire was caused by aerosol propellant fumes getting into a hot projector.



WHAT ARE THE STREET NAMES FOR ABUSING SOLVENTS?

Lots of these – buzzing, huffing and sniffing are the most common terms in the UK currently. Some others are tooting, glading, dusting, poor man's pot, angel dusting, bad breath, glueing, chroming, netting and cheming.

WHAT ABOUT WARNING SIGNS ON PRODUCTS?

Really important to be aware that not all products carry all warning signs. In the UK, the SACKI logo (stands for Solvent Abuse Can Kill Instantly) appears on many products. However, manufacturers do not have to use this logo. So never think that a product without this logo means that the product is safe. Read the label fully.

WHAT OTHER BAD HEALTH EFFECTS ARE THERE?

Not a part of the body is immune from potential harm. Brain damage, breathing problems, hearing and sight loss, limb coordination, reproductive damage, kidney failure, liver damage, bone marrow damage (leukaemia – petrol particularly).