

# INHALANT ABUSE SYMPTOMS & CONSIDERATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT & EMERGENCY MEDICAL PERSONNEL

**Paint or stains on clothing or body, especially face and hands**

**Presence of chemical-soaked rags, plastic or paper bags, socks or clothing  
or *latex* balloons**

**Drunk, dazed, dizzy or drowsy appearance lacking explanations**

**Anxiety, excitability, irritability**

**Red or runny eyes or nose**

**Spots, sores or rash around the mouth or nose**

**Chemical breath odor**

**Nausea, loss of appetite, drooling**

**Unexplained abusable products hidden, nearby or in possession of  
suspected abuser (i.e. aerosol sprays or paint, lighters or refills, glues,  
solvents, propane, etc.)**

## **Special Considerations:**

**Approaching a suspected abuser:** Use extreme caution, trying not to frighten. Abusers, adult or youth, may be very excitable and given to impulsive or violent behavior. They may use unanticipated physical strength. Any fright may cause sudden heart failure. If unconscious, remove vapor source/bag, use CPR to stabilize.

**Accident or death scene investigation:** Suspect inhalants when unexplained intoxicated behavior is observed or death without obvious causes, i.e. no other “drugs” evident, no obvious wounds or weapons. Suspect inhalants when victim is found with a bag over head; traces of paint on mouth, nose or hands; or rash around mouth and/or nose. Check vicinity for abusable products and/or paraphernalia. Identify/note location then “bag” suspected products or product labels and paraphernalia for both analysis and cause of death determination by medical examiner, pathologist, toxicologist or coroner.