

Amyl and the Sniffers

Origins

- Mid 19th century – nitrites
- Glues – 1960's
- Aerosols – 1970's - present

Prevalence

- In 2020, a survey showed 2.4 million in the U.S. over the age of 12 had used an inhalant in the past year.

Common Ages for Use

- Young teens/preteens (12-17) are the most common
- Some as young as 5 years old have been identified as using
- Some progress into adulthood

Slang

- Whippets
- Duster
- Air blast
- Hippie crack
- Moon gas
- Snappers
- Poppers
- Poor man's pot
- Rush
- Whiteout
- Chroming

Types of Inhalants

- Aerosols – paint, hair spray, vegetable oil sprays, air fresheners, deodorant, oven cleaner, and others
- Gases – computer cleaning spray (duster), butane, nitrous oxide (laughing gas), propane, whipped cream, freon, and helium
- Solvents – glue, markers, gas, nail polish remover, paint thinner, degreasers, and correction fluid (white out)
- Nitrites – labeled and marketed under “video head cleaner,” room aromas or deodorizers, and “leather cleaner.” Commonly called “poppers” or “snappers.”

Methods of Use

- Snorting – inhaling directly into the nose
- Dusting – spraying aerosol into the nose or mouth
- Huffing – soaking a rag or other object and then holding it to the face or stuffing it in the mouth while inhaling
- Glading – inhaling air-fresheners
- Ballooning – filling a balloon and inhaling the gas
- Bagging – inhaling after filling a paper or plastic bag with a substance

Effects (high)

- Absorbed by the lungs – reach the brain in seconds (rapid and direct stimulation of reward pathways)
- Euphoria – excited, happy, and similar to other intoxicants
- Dopamine – some release dopamine (feel good chemical) in the brain
- Duration – typically only a few minutes leading to repeated use
- Nitrites – act differently in that they have more physical effects

Harmful Effects

- Death – heart arrhythmias and suffocation (direct or indirect)
- Coma
- Hearing loss
- Mood changes – violence, confusion, hallucinations, depression, apathy
- Nerve damage – numbness, weakness, tingling, tremors
- Loss of bowel and bladder control
- Liver damage
- Bone marrow damage

Signs of Use

- Rash or blisters – face or hands
- Paint staining – clothing or skin
- Loss of appetite/weight loss
- Odor – chemical smell on clothes or breath
- Persistent cough/runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Hallucinations
- Hiding empty containers, rags, etc..
- Preoccupied with finding the substance of choice

What are Amyl Nitrites

- Inhalant
- Class: Alkyl Nitrite
 - Amyl nitrite
 - Butyl nitrite
 - Isobutyl nitrite
 - Isopropyl nitrite
- Vasodilator
- Depressant – slows messaging between the brain and the body
- First documented in 1844
 - First medical use in 1867
 - Synthesized by a French chemist

What's it Look Like

- Typically comes in a small bottles
- Highly volatile oil that is clear or yellowish
- Distinct smell described as fruity, sweet, or like dirty socks



Street Names

- Poppers (originally came in glass vials that were “popped”)
- Jungle Juice
- Liquid gold
- Rush
- Purple haze
- Buzz

Clinical Uses

- Angina
- Cyanide poisoning

Recreational Uses

- Inhaled to enhance sexual experiences or general sense of pleasure
- Historically and still common with MSM
- Becoming popular as a “party drug”

How Easy Are They To Buy?

- Technically a legal substance
- Illegal to use or misuse as a recreational drug
 - Typically sold in sex shops
 - Also sold “under the counter”

Addiction/Withdrawal/Tolerance

- Do not cause addiction or withdrawal
- Can cause tolerance

How Are They Used?

- Sniffing directly from the bottle
- Soaking a cloth and breathing the fumes in
- Dipping a cigarette in the liquid and then sniffing (dangerous if the cigarette was to be lit as the liquid is highly flammable)

High

- Occurs within seconds
- May only last a few minutes
- Feelings of happiness
- Increased sex drive
- Visual changes
- Lower inhibitions
- Impaired judgment

Side Effects

- Fast pulse
- Flushing of your face and neck
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Restlessness
- Eye problems like light sensitivity and blind spots

Serious Risks

- Brain damage
- Easier transmission of STD's
- Sudden sniffing death syndrome (heart stops)
- Methaemoglobinaemia – a blood disorder that causes inadequate oxygen supply to body tissue
- Maculopathy (loss of vision) – most commonly associated with isopropyl nitrite

Medical Conditions At Risk

- Pregnancy
- HTN
- Anemia
- Heart conditions
- Increased intracranial pressure

Signs Of Use

- Skin rash
- Direct skin contact can cause chemical burns

Drug-Drug Interactions

- ED medications – can lead to rapid drops in BP leading to stroke, MI, or death
- Stimulants – increase in heart rate and cardiac arrest

Help

- 988
- SAMHSA National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP 94357)
- NA
- Community mental health

The End

- Discussion
- Questions?