

OTC & Inhalents TEACHER'S GUIDE

What teachers need to know:

The fastest-growing drug abuse among kids ages 12 to 17 is not marijuana, meth or ecstasy... it is the abuse of over-the-counter medicine such as cold tablets and cough syrup, and prescriptions meant for parents, siblings or friends.

- The active ingredient in over-the-counter medicine sought by abusers is dextromethorphan, a narcotic derivative used in more than 125 cough suppressants, including Robitussin DM and Nyquil.
- Since 1990, U.S. prescriptions for Ritalin (methylphenidate) and other psycho-stimulants (used for ADD/ADHD) have increased by as much as 700%, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.
- Painkillers are the most common pharmaceutical abused by teens. Girls abuse prescription medications more than boys.
- The number of Americans ages 12 and older who used inhalants was 16.7 million in 2000.
- About 22% of those who die from huffing (inhaling) do so the first time they try it, according to research published in the journal *Human Toxicology*.

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Conduct research on a given topic to compose a news report
- Identify the short- and long-term effects of huffing based on their research
- Offer advice to parents to help children resist peer pressure to experiment with inhalants

Materials:

- Pens, pencils, paper

Project and Purpose:

Students will research and write a news broadcast (for TV or radio) on huffing. The report will include facts and warnings. *NOTE: Teachers may substitute a different abused legal drug for students to research.*

1. Introduce this activity by asking your students to define "huffing." (Answer: huffing is the act of inhaling intoxicating vapors found in glues and common household products.)
3. Share with students the following statistic from a 2000 survey on drug use: Approximately 2 million U.S. kids reported sniffing glue or other dangerous inhalants to get high at least once in their life.
4. Explain to your students that the study's finding is considered to be newsworthy and that their assignment is to write a two-minute news broadcast that will communicate this information to the public. Students will research the problem of inhalants including the proven short- and long-term effects of huffing. Students will also find expert advice to quote, providing their "listeners" with information to help their children resist peer pressure.
Note: You may decide to allow students to work independently or with a partner. Students may prepare either a television or radio broadcast. Encourage students who present television broadcasts to utilize interesting graphics that will enhance their stories. You may want to suggest that students record (on video) their presentations instead of presenting live broadcasts. This may help reduce some students' inhibitions about presenting in front of the class, as well as save class time.
5. Allow time for students to conduct their research and prepare their news broadcasts. This may be used as a homework assignment or two-part class assignment.
6. Set aside class time for students to present their broadcasts to their peers.

Class Discussion Questions:

- Which do you think is more influential on a person's inclination to do drugs – his genetic background (i.e. parents who have substance abuse issues) or his environment/peers? Why?
- Why do so many kids choose to use or experiment with "legal" drugs?
- What is your school's policy on drug use? Do you agree with this policy? Why or why not?

Self-Reflection Questions:

- Do you know someone who has used drugs for non-medical purposes (to get high)? Why do you think the person used drugs? Did you prevent the person from using drugs? If so, what did you do? If not, why not?
- Have you and your parents ever talked about the dangers of using illegal drugs? Explain. Have your parents ever discussed with you the dangers of using other drugs, like prescription medications or over-the-counter medications? Explain.
- Have you ever been tempted to use drugs, legal or illegal? If so, why? If not, what kept you from trying them?

Evaluation:

- Did students participate in the discussions?
- Did each student research and create a broadcast news story to report?
- Did each student present a news story?
- Can students identify the short- and long-term effects of huffing (or other legal drug)?