

Inhalants – Volatile substances

Classifications, products and uses

Inhalants refer to a variety of substances used for intoxication including volatile solvents, aerosols, gases and nitrates. Volatile substances are chemical compounds that readily turn into a gas at room temperature. Many of these substances are found in household products. The table below outlines the classifications of volatile substances and the uses or products in which they are present. It's important to note that some products may contain more than one type of these compounds.

When discussing inhalant use with clients, exercise caution to avoid introducing them to inhalable products they may not have been previously aware of. This includes not sharing this worker resource.

Classification	Chemical	Product/Uses
Aliphatic hydrocarbons	- Butane - Propane - Naphtha	- Petrol - Deodorant & other aerosol propellants - Glue - Spray paint - BBQ /Gas stoves
Aromatic hydrocarbons	- Benzene - Toluene - Xylene	- Petrol - Glue - Spray paint - Nail polish remover
Halogenated hydrocarbons	- Tetrafluoroethane - Freons	- Refrigerants & air conditioners - Computer dust spray - Deodorant & other aerosol propellants
Alkyl nitrites	- Amyl nitrite - Isobutyl nitrite	- Angina (chest pain) medication "Poppers" (a generic slang term for alkyl nitrites) for recreational use
Dinitrogen monoxide	Nitrous oxide	- Whipped cream chargers ("bulbs") - Medical and dental use, for sedation - Automotive industry use for improved engine performance

Reference: Radparvar S. The Clinical Assessment and Treatment of Inhalant Abuse. Perm J. 2023 Jun 15;27(2):99-109. doi: 10.7812/TPP/22.164. Epub 2023 Apr 20. PMID: 37078126; PMCID: PMC10266853.