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**Poppers (Nitrites)**

# Nitrites

*Amyl, butyl, hardware, liquid gold, locker room, poppers, ram, rock hard, rush, snapper, stag, stud, thrust, TNT*

## What do they look like?



## What are nitrites?

Amyl, butyl and isobutyl nitrite (collectively known as alkyl nitrites or poppers) are clear, yellow liquids which are inhaled for their intoxicating effects. In the UK nitrites are usually sold as a gold coloured liquid in a small bottle. There are many different brand names, such as THT and liquid gold. The liquid is inhaled either straight from the bottle or from a cloth. Nitrites originally came as small glass capsules that were popped open. This led to nitrites being given the name 'poppers' but this form of the drug is rarely found in the UK.

Nitrites tend to have a sweet odour when fresh but this tends to turn to a 'dirty socks' smell when stale. In the UK, it is largely butyl nitrite which is sold in sex shops, pubs, clubs and sometimes tobacconists or clothes shops, retailing at up to £5 a bottle.

## What will they do to me?

The effects start soon after inhalation but only last for a few minutes. People experience a 'rush' as heartbeat quickens and blood rushes to the head. Sniffing poppers during sex can make orgasms feel like they last longer and some people say it enhances their erections. It may also help relax the sphincter muscles making anal intercourse easier. As a result it is often sold in sex shops, dance clubs and gay bars and clubs.

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Inhalation of alkyl nitrite causes the blood pressure to fall within ten seconds. The blood pressure is said to continue to fall for about thirty seconds and to return to normal after approximately a minute and a half.

Poppers cause muscles around blood vessels to relax, making your heart speed up to pump more blood. Oxygen-rich blood reaching the brain produces a "rush" sensation.

## When do they become a problem?

Commonly reported side effects of nitrites include a pounding headache, dizziness, nausea, a slowed down sense of time, a flushed face and neck and a feeling of light headedness. The fact that some people use nitrites for sexual pleasure may make it more difficult to practice safer sex whilst high.

Users can lose consciousness especially if they are engaged in vigorous physical activity such as dancing or running. Nitrite use has also led to heart attacks when people already have heart or blood pressure problems. There have also been cases of fatalities when people have drunk nitrites rather than inhaling the vapours.

Nitrites increase pressure on the eyeball and are dangerous for people to use if they have the eye disease glaucoma.

Regular users may also find tolerance develops and that use of nitrites no longer brings on a high. Long term use may lead to psychological dependence but there are no reports of physical dependence or withdrawal symptoms.

## Staying safer

- Try and avoid repeated or prolonged use.
- Avoid using poppers if suffering from heart problems, high blood pressure or glaucoma.
- Do not mix with other drugs.

## The Law

Most nitrites are not illegal to manufacture, supply or be in possession of and they are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act. As a result possession is not illegal but supply can be an offence. There've been cases where the Medicines Act was used to fine shops for selling them, but they're still sold as Room Aromas or Deodorisers in sex shops and some clubs.