



*For further information:*

**Drugaid**

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0870 numbers are more expensive from a mobile. 0870 numbers are cheaper from a landline.

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**[www.drugaidcymru.com](http://www.drugaidcymru.com)**



**Solvents (Gas)**

# Solvents

(also known as volatile substances)

**Glue sniffing, Tooting, Sniffing, Inhaling, Buzzing gas**

**What do they look like?**



**What are solvents?**

Solvents cover a huge number of substances from gas lighter refills to mothballs to glue and hairspray.

**What will they do to me?**

Solvents are depressants which slow down the activity of the brain and central nervous system. This results in messages to and from the brain being slowed down, affecting how you move, think and feel. They can also cause hallucinations.

The effects start 20-30 seconds after using and usually last less than 45 minutes without taking any more. Sniffing glue will last longer than inhaling butane.

The following are some of the effects people have reported:

- Drowsiness after initial excitement
- Sickness
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Loss of co-ordination
- Buzzing in the ears
- Light-headedness
- Chronic headaches
- Paranoia and anxiety
- Numbness and tingling in hands and feet
- Breathing difficulties
- Hallucinations
- Visual distortions - flashes of lights before the eyes
- Violent/aggressive behaviour
- Mood swings
- Blackouts

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**When do they become a problem?**

Anyone experimenting with solvents is at risk from sudden death and using solvents in combination with alcohol is especially risky.

On average there is 1 death a week from solvent use (Re-Solv website). Some of these deaths will be first time sniffers and most of them are young people under the age of 19. Death may occur at the first attempt or following many attempts – it can happen at anytime. Heart failure, fatal accidents when 'high', choking on vomit, suffocation (if using a plastic bag over the head to sniff or if glue blocks the nose and mouth), asphyxiation (when the fumes replace all the oxygen in the body), burns and explosions.

- Squirting gas products down the throat is a particularly dangerous way of using. It can make your throat swell so you can't breathe and slows down your heart.
- Long-term misuse of solvents has been shown to damage the brain, liver and kidneys.
- Long term regular use may also lead to people becoming very tired, forgetful and not being able to concentrate.
- Damage can happen to the nervous system: involuntary twitching and numbness.
- Breathing difficulties from damage to the lungs can happen.
- Damage to the eye (optic atrophy) and the inner ear (cochlea).

**Staying safer**

- Avoid highly dangerous ways of using solvents such as squirting down the throat, or inhaling with a plastic bag.
- Do not mix with other drugs – particularly alcohol.
- Try not to use repeatedly, try and use when other people are present and avoid using in places where serious accidents can occur i.e. by the railway, by the motorway or industrial areas etc.
- Many of these products are highly flammable and if sniffed at the same time as smoking, or using a naked flame, can cause fires or may even explode.
- If you are using in a room make sure you open a window so that there is ventilation or air.

**The Law**

**The Intoxicating Substances Supply Act 1985**, applying to England and Wales, makes it an offence for a person to supply or offer to supply to someone under the age of 18 a substance 'if he knows or has reasonable cause to believe that the substance or its fumes are likely to be inhaled for the purpose of causing intoxication'.