

STOP AND DON'T SMELL THE SHOE POLISH. THE USE OF INHALANTS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction: Inhalant abuse among U.S. adolescents is a common occurrence. Unlike the illegal drugs, inhalants are readily available in an average household in many forms. According to the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, between 100-125 deaths are attributed to inhalant abuse annually. We will describe a case of a Kenyan immigrant who developed acute psychotic episode following inhalation.

Case report: A 17 year old Kenyan immigrant was brought to the ED after inhaling shoe polish. She has a history of PTSD from being raped while on the street in Kenya. She was later adopted and brought to the USA. Her psychotic symptoms resolved after she was treated with olanzapine 5mg.

Discussion: Medical complications include, but are not limited to the following central nervous system, cardiovascular, pulmonary, gastrointestinal, renal, hematologic, and dermatologic. In addition to medical complications, there are psychiatric complications as well. Adolescents abusing inhalants may often present with hallucinations, emotional disturbances, inappropriate affect, manic symptoms, or suicidal ideation. Inhalant use has also been associated with conduct disorder in adolescents, as well as major depressive disorder and substance abuse disorder later in life.

Conclusion: The use of inhalants to achieve a "high" continues to be a dangerous occurrence within the adolescent population. The consequences of inhalant abuse go beyond the immediate medical complications or social effects. An adolescent's mental health may be severely impaired, with psychiatric effects extending well into adulthood. Physicians and parents should be aware of the possibility of psychosis cause by inhalant abuse.