

7. Questions to consider

1. Do I know the signs & symptoms which may indicate aerosol abuse?
2. Do I know where to signpost young people who are engaging in aerosol abuse?

6. Support resources

[Turning Point](#): local substance misuse services.

[Re-Solv](#): resources and support about solvent abuse for adults, young people, families and professionals.

Young Minds: [Guide for parents about drug & alcohol misuse](#)

5. Management

Exploration of context of aerosol abuse:

- Predisposing/precipitating factors
- Perpetuating factors
- Protective factors
- Any additional vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns

Educate – ensure awareness of risks.

Consider:

- Referral to Turning Point.
- Referral to School Nursing Service (City) or Teen Health 11-19 Service (County & Rutland)/Early Help/Childrens Social Care.
- Referral to support for mental health needs.

1. Background & why it matters

Aerosols (deodorants, hairsprays etc) use butane as a propellant; butane is implicated in over half of all deaths associated with solvent abuse. Aerosols are cheap and easily obtainable by children & young people. Deaths due to aerosol abuse can occur as a result of suffocation, choking or refractory cardiac tachyarrhythmia ('Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome'); in many cases individuals die due to an unwitnessed cardiac arrest.

2. Methods of abuse:

Butane is a nervous system depressant, and when inhaled is absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream, passing rapidly to the brain & other organs. Effects begin quickly, feelings of euphoria only last a few minutes, however intoxicating effects can continue for up to 30-40 minutes.

Common methods of inhalational abuse:

Sniffing – sniffing or snorting from containers.

Spraying – spraying aerosol directly into the nose or mouth.

Bagging – sniffing or inhaling fumes from substances sprayed or placed in a paper or plastic bag.

Huffing – Holding a rag soaked with inhalant up to the face/stuffing in the mouth.

Inhaling – breathing in vapours (method commonly seen in nitrous oxide abuse, inhaling from balloons).



4. Other signs of aerosol abuse

- Episodes of looking or acting dazed, dizzy or intoxicated
- Slurred or confused speech
- Red or runny eyes and nose, nosebleeds
- Chemical odours on breath or clothing
- Stains, paint, glitter and or chemical smell on skin or clothing
- Nausea and or loss of appetite
- Confusion, moodiness, irritability
- Inattention, lack of coordination, and depression

3. 'Huffer's rash'

Volatile hydrocarbons such as butane can cause skin irritation, contributing to dryness and inflammatory changes.

A perioral dermatitis can develop ('glue sniffer's rash' or 'Huffer's rash').

Key point: Perioral rashes in a young person with a history of solvent abuse may be an indicator of ongoing misuse.