

### How do solvents and volatile substances work?

When the fumes/chemicals from products are breathed in on purpose, they are absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream. The chemicals in solvents are fat soluble and so pass rapidly to the brain and other body organs, making the effects kick in very quickly.

The effects from sniffing can vary from person to person. This depends upon their size, age, health, product sniffed, whether the person is used to sniffing and the environment they are sniffing in - for example, whether the person is on their own, with others, at a party, etc. The effect on the 'sniffers' emotions can also depend on the mood of the individual before sniffing. For example, if the 'sniffer' is happy beforehand then the 'high' will be greater.

Due to the rapid entry of the fumes/chemical into the bloodstream through the lungs, the effect will kick in within 20-30 seconds and last for the next 30-40 minutes.

However, the 'high' usually last only a few minutes. The duration of the experience depends on the product sniffed, for example, glue has a longer duration than butane.

The person sniffing solvents will often experience an initial feeling of euphoria, well-being and relaxation, as well as possible confusion and unsteadiness. The symptoms and effects from sniffing solvents are very similar to alcohol intoxication, although the speed of onset is much more rapid and can include the following:

- Drowsiness: the initial excitement is often followed by drowsiness
- Sickness
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Loss of co-ordination
- Buzz - buzzing in the ears
- Light-headed - floaty feeling
- Chronic headaches
- Numbness and tingling in hands and feet
- Breathing difficulties
- Hallucinations
- Visual distortions - flashes of lights before the eyes
- Violent/aggressive behaviour
- Mood swings
- Loss of inhibitions
- Paranoia and anxiety
- Blackouts

(Some of the above effects are as described by current and 'ex-sniffers' during consultations.)