

What protections can you make

All your staff should be aware of their responsibilities and that sensible precautions are taken to prevent sales.

Identification

What is acceptable proof of age?

- Proof of age card schemes. Such cards include Citizen Card, Validate, connexions, etc.
- UK photo card driving licence or UK full paper driving licence
- Passports
- National ID card issued by a European Union country.

Being vigilant

Young people who are trying to buy or steal volatile substances to sniff may behave in a suspicious manner. Be aware of:

- Young people in groups
- Young people buying larger than usual quantities of products
- Truant children buying these products
- Young people who take a number of plastic bags, as these can be used to sniff from.

Signs and Symptoms of 'Sniffing'

- 'Drunken' behaviour such as lack of coordination and coherence
- A chemical smell on their clothing, hair or breath
- Dilated pupils, red, puffy, watery eyes
- Pale complexion
- Persistent runny nose
- Rashes or spots around the nose and mouth (only occurs with certain products)
- Irritation of the throat with coughing or gagging
- Nausea/vomiting

National Information Line

01785 810762

Mon-Fri, 9am - 5pm
(excluding public holidays)



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VISA
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Volatile Substance Abuse (VSA) is when solvents and volatile substances are inhaled through the mouth and/or nose for the sole purpose of getting a 'high.'

What are solvents & volatile substances?

Solvents and volatile substances are a range of products (many are everyday household items) that give off an intoxicating vapour.

There are two ingredients that are candidates for 'sniffing' - solvents and gases. They are described as volatile substances because they readily evaporate at room temperature and in doing so give off a 'sniffable' vapour.

Solvents - are used to keep products dissolved until they are ready for use, e.g. to pour, spread or squirt and then to evaporate from the product quickly without a trace. This quick evaporation and volatility gives the intoxicating effect. If solvents were not used, the products would solidify in their containers.

As well as solvents being used to keep the products in a liquid state, they are also used to dissolve and liquefy materials once they have gone solid, i.e. nail varnish remover.

Gases - These are fuel gases, i.e. cigarette lighter refills or propellants.

Propellants are pressurised liquid gases used to propel the contents (deodorant, hairspray, paint, etc.) from the container. There are a number of these, but the main propellant used these days is butane.

There are more than a hundred commercially available products that are now used to get a

Retailers have a legal responsibility to prevent the sale of these products in certain situations. The possible penalties of not complying is up to £5,000 in fines and six months imprisonment.

'high.' In the home there may be over thirty 'sniffable' products.

Below are some of the products that can be 'sniffed':

- Cigarette lighter refills
- Aerosols - deodorants, hairspray, paint spray, pain-relieving spray, air freshener, fly spray, etc.
- Solvent-based adhesives
- Some typewriter correction fluids
- Nail varnish and nail varnish remover
- Dry-cleaning fluids
- Paint thinners and paint removers
- UHT cream - whipped cream cans
- Damp Start
- Dyes (for shoes)
- Cleaning agents - degreasing materials, plaster remover, etc.

Common confusions

Not all adhesives can be abused. For example there are many water based adhesives such as PVA glue, or adhesives based upon chemical reactions such as superglues. Many products such as perfumes, bleaches, etc. have strong smells but they do not contain any solvents that when inhaled will cause intoxication.

What are the dangers of sniffing?

The biggest danger from misusing these products is **INSTANT DEATH.**

Anyone experimenting with solvents is at risk from sudden death. Death can also occur due to heart failure, fatal accidents, burns and explosions, asphyxiation, choking on vomit and suffocation.

Whilst 'sniffing' is not illegal, there are some laws regarding the supply of certain products.

Cigarette Lighter Refill (Safety) Regulations 1999

It is an offence to supply any cigarette lighter refills containing butane to any person under the age of 18 years.

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985

Applicable in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is illegal for a person to sell or supply a substance to anyone believed to be under the age of 18 or anyone acting on behalf of someone under that age, if he or she has reasonable cause to believe that the substance may be inhaled for the purpose of intoxication.

Scottish Common Law

The supply or sale of solvents or volatile substances to any person, knowing that these substances will be abused has been held to constitute criminal conduct. Courts have imposed fines of up to £12,000 and prison sentences of two years.

Petrol

You must not sell petrol to anyone under the age of 16.

The Medicines Act

Amyl nitrite is a prescription only medicine and while possession is not illegal, the supply can be an offence. Nitrous oxide (laughing gas) is also classed under the Medicines Act and anyone over 18 can also buy it for use in cooking. There is currently no offence for possession of nitrous oxide. However, there may be legal implications if it is sold to minors.

