

WARNING

Nitrous oxide (also known as 'Laughing gas')



Inhaling nitrous oxide can be dangerous and can lead to loss of blood pressure, fainting and even heart attack. Prolonged exposure to nitrous oxide may also result in bone marrow suppression and poisoning of the central nervous system. These risks are likely to be exacerbated if the exposure to the gas is combined with alcohol and other drugs.

It is an offence to supply nitrous oxide to persons under the age of 18 for the purposes of intoxication – *Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985*

The effects of nitrous oxide

Regular use can lead to red blood cell problems that could result in anaemia. There is a risk of vitamin D deficiency and a link with mood swings and depression. There is also a risk of vitamin B12 deficiency with continued regular use. Vitamin B12 deficiency can potentially cause severe and irreversible damage, especially to the brain and nervous system.

An infographic with a dark, textured background. At the top, the title 'SHORT-TERM EFFECTS' is written in a white, hand-drawn font. Below the title, a person is shown in profile, inhaling from a white balloon. A white ECG line is overlaid on the image. The text 'Most inhalants act directly on the nervous system to produce mind-altering effects. Within seconds, the user experiences intoxication and other effects similar to those from alcohol. There are a variety of effects that may be experienced during or shortly after use, including:' is written in white. Below this text are two columns of bulleted points, each starting with a red asterisk. A small red number '8' is visible in the bottom left corner of the infographic.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Most inhalants act directly on the nervous system to produce mind-altering effects. Within seconds, the user experiences intoxication and other effects similar to those from alcohol. There are a variety of effects that may be experienced during or shortly after use, including:

- * Slurred speech
- * Drunk, dizzy or dazed appearance
- * Inability to coordinate movement
- * Hallucinations and delusions
- * Hostility
- * Apathy
- * Impaired judgment
- * Unconsciousness
- * Severe headaches
- * Rashes around the nose and mouth
- * Prolonged sniffing of these chemicals can induce irregular and rapid heart beat and lead to heart failure and death within minutes.
- * Death from suffocation can occur by replacing oxygen in the lungs with the chemical, and then in the central nervous system, so that breathing ceases.

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LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Long-term users have experienced:

- * Muscle weakness
- * Disorientation
- * Lack of coordination
- * Irritability
- * Depression
- * Serious and sometimes irreversible damage to the heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and brain
- * Memory impairment, diminished intelligence
- * Hearing loss
- * Bone marrow damage
- * Deaths from heart failure or asphyxiation (loss of oxygen)

Chronic exposure to inhalants can produce significant, sometimes irreversible, damage to the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.

The chronic use of inhalants has been associated with a number of serious health problems. Sniffing glue and paint thinner causes kidney problems. Sniffing toluene and other solvents causes liver damage. Inhalant abuse has also resulted in memory impairment and diminished intelligence.

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Further information

Re-Solv

Re-Solv is the expert charity working across the UK to end solvent abuse and support all those whose lives are affected by it. Call 01785 810762

<https://www.re-solv.org/>

<https://www.re-solv.org/parents-guide/>

Facts about nitrous oxide

<http://evolvenorthwest.com/facts/vsa>

<http://evolvenorthwest.com/>

<https://www.drugwise.org.uk/nitrous-oxide/>

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/nitrous-oxide?a=Nitrous%20oxide>

No laughing matter

