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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week is March 18-24
Inhalants & Poisons - They're right under your nose

One in five students in America has used an inhalant to get high by eighth grade. According to a 2005 CDC survey, **11 percent of youth ages 10-24 years in Florida have** used inhalants. Inhalant use can lead directly to death, but is also a risk factor that often contributes to cause of death in children and teens. It's estimated that one million people used inhalants last year.

Inhalants, cheap, legal and accessible – are as popular among middle school students as marijuana. Most parents are in the dark regarding the popularity and dangers of inhalant use. But children have discovered that common household products are inexpensive, easy to hide and an easy way to get high. According to national surveys, inhaling dangerous products is one of the most widespread problems in the country. It is as popular as marijuana with young people. Here, from the Pinellas County Health Department, is information about inhalants and inhalant use.

What is inhalant use? Inhalant use refers to intentional breathing gas or vapors with the purpose of getting high. Inhalants are legal, everyday products which have a useful purpose, but can be misused. You're probably familiar with many of these substances – paint, glue and others. But you probably don't know that more than 1,000 products are very dangerous when inhaled – things like typewriter correction fluid, air-conditioning refrigerant, felt tip markers, spray paint, air freshener, butane and even cooking spray.

What can inhalants do to the body? Nearly all abused products produce effects similar to anesthetics, which slow down body function. Depending upon level of dosage, the user can experience slight stimulation, feeling of less inhibition or loss of consciousness. The user can also suffer from Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome This means the user can die the first, tenth or hundredth time a product is misused as an inhalant. Other effects include damage to the heart, kidney, brain, liver, bone marrow and other organs. Results similar to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may also occur when inhalants are used during pregnancy. Inhalants are physically and psychologically addicting and users suffer withdrawal symptoms.

What should I tell my child or students about inhalants? It is never too early to teach your children about the dangers of inhalants. And don't say, "not my kid." Inhalant use starts as early as elementary school and is a gateway to further substance abuse. Parents are often ignorant of inhalant use or do not educate their children until it is too late. Inhalants are not drugs. **They are poisons and toxins** and should be discussed as such.

To find out more, contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at 1-800-269-4237 for information on treatment and general information on inhalants.

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The Mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity.