

# Helping Hand

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## Advocates Concerned About “How to Use Drugs” Videos on *You -Tube*

Inhalants have always been easy to find — in fact, curious teens only have to venture as far as their linen closet or pantry. But now videos posted on the popular website *You-*

*Tube* have made it easy to learn how to use them. The videos have raised red flags among the substance abuse prevention community, and many are calling for the removal of these graphic videos.

The videos are a graphic “how-to” manual for huffing — providing demonstrations of teens inhaling products, such as computer keyboard cleaner, paint, Freon and helium, to get high. In the videos, the teens are visibly intoxicated, laughing, falling down and seemingly having a good time. The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC), along with various national prevention advocacy groups, are concerned that the videos glorify inhalant abuse and can potentially lure young people into using inhalants who might otherwise not use them.

“If kids aren’t aware of what inhalants are and they just see kids having fun on *You-Tube*, laughing and talking goofy, it can be an attraction for them,” explained Harvey Weiss, the NIPC’s Executive Director. “It glorifies inhalant use without demonstrating the potential consequences.”

Today, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about one in six students in the United States has used an inhalant to get high by the time they reach the eighth grade.

Recent media reports have highlighted the tragedies that can result from inhalant use, such as the death of Idaho-native Danielle Dunbar, whose heart stopped after huffing computer cleaner. Indeed, inhalants are among the most deadly of drugs because they can cause death even with a single episode.

While sudden cardiac arrest is the most common, huffing can also cause motor vehicle accidents, falls, and other traumatic injuries, as well as suffocation, burns and even suicide. Weiss said the *You-Tube* videos can only exacerbate the problem.

“Without the appropriate caveat explaining that inhalants are deadly and dangerous, this could be a potential recipe for death,” he said.

In partnership with other national prevention advocacy groups, the NIPC contacted *You-Tube* to request the removal of the videos.

“Just doing a search for duster, air duster, huffing, sniffing, canned air or inhalants can result in several videos. One person even told me that they found 30 videos up there.”

“Thanks to the efforts of our partners, some of the videos have been removed — but new ones keep cropping up,” Weiss said.



## Adolescent Brain May Be More Resistant to Alcohol

Animal tests show that the adolescent brain may be more tolerant of the effects of alcohol and bounce intoxicating effects than the brains of adults, Reuters reported last year.

Adolescent rats given alcohol seemed to recover more quickly than adults in terms of regaining social drinking. Researchers suggested that the same could be true in humans, which is considered dangerous because teens to drink more, especially since most teen drinking is seen as social in nature.

The study could help explain why so many teens drink heavily. The research, led by Elena I. Varlinskaya University, was published in the November 2006 issue of the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental*

Reference: Varlinskaya, E.I., Spear, L.P. (2006) Ontogeny of Acute Tolerance to Ethanol-Induced Social Sprague–Dawley Rats. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 30(11): 1833-1844.



## Do Rich Students Use Drugs More Than Poor?

A recent survey says yes. According to data from California's Healthy Kids Survey, rich students from Alameda and Contra Costa counties in California were more likely to use alcohol and other drugs than their peers from poor communities.

*The Contra Costa Times* reported that disposable income, disconnected families,

and pressure to succeed all contribute to drug use among upscale youth, adding that parents in these communities add to the problem by denying that it occurs. “Perfection is very, very valued in affluent communities,” noted Madeline Levine, author of *The Price of Privilege*.

More affluent young people also can afford to buy fake IDs and can drive to places where they can pay someone to buy alcohol for them, experts note. Binge drinking and past-month alcohol use among high-school juniors were more prevalent in richer areas of the East Bay than in less-affluent areas, according to the survey, and more juniors from rich towns admitted to having gotten high on drugs. “You can make some general assessments that affluent areas have higher alcohol and marijuana use,” said Sean Slade, regional manager for the California Healthy Kids Survey.

Students in affluent areas have lower alcohol and other drug use rates in the lower grades, but often catch up or surpass drug-use rates among poorer youth when they reach high school. Some upscale communities have turned to “social host” laws to counter permissive attitudes among parents, some of whom believe it is better to allow their children to drink at home with friends than to go out and do it.



## Survey Identifies Teachers' Needs

Pre-K through 12th-grade teachers want more preparation in classroom management and instructional skills, according to a nationwide Teacher Needs Survey released recently by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, a partnership between the APA Education Directorate's Center for Psychology in the Schools and Education and 14 child-related APA divisions.

The coalition's goal is to support educators' ability to apply an understanding of successful teaching and learning methods — based on psychological science — in their classrooms and schools.

According to the more than 2,300 responses received, teachers want help with classroom management in areas including student safety in classrooms and dealing with students' negative or disruptive behaviors. Teachers also want help with instructional skills, such as promoting critical thinking and motivating students to learn.

The survey also indicates that teachers want “further preparation in addressing the achievement disparities they see every day — disparities also reinforced by data collected to meet No Child Left Behind regulations,” said psychologist Rena Subotnik, PhD, Director of APA's Center for Psychology in the Schools and Education.

Novice teachers, in particular, expressed a strong need for assistance. “New teachers, those most likely to leave the profession, told us that they are seeking instructional strategies to serve the wide range of achievement levels students bring to the same classroom,” said Subotnik.

By reporting these findings, the coalition hopes it will help inform public policy as well as influence the creation of APA professional development courses for teachers based on their needs.

Full text of the executive summary of the report is available at: [http://www.apa.org/ed/cpse/tns\\_execsummary.pdf](http://www.apa.org/ed/cpse/tns_execsummary.pdf)



## Fewer High School Students Engage in Health Risk Behaviors; Racial and Ethnic Differences Persist

Fewer US high school students are engaging in health-risk behaviors compared to their counterparts from 15 years ago, according to the 2005 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Despite an overall decrease in health-risk behaviors among high school students since 1991, racial and ethnic differences continue to be evident.

Two highlights of the survey involved seat belt use and alcohol use. High school students appear to be getting the message to buckle up. The 2005 National YRBS found only 10% of high school students said they rarely or never wore a seat belt when riding in a car, a dramatic decline from the 18% in 2003 and 26% in 1991. The percentage of students who report current alcohol use has also declined dramatically (43% in 2005 vs. 51% in 1991) since the first YRBS survey.

Other improvements seen during the past 15 years include a decline in the percentage of high school students reporting ever having sexual intercourse. In 2005, 47% of students said they had ever had sexual intercourse, roughly the same as in the 2003 National YRBS, but down from 54% reporting ever having sexual intercourse in the National YRBS survey in 1991. In addition, 63% of sexually-active students reported that they or their partner had used a condom during last sexual intercourse (same as the 2003 National YRBS), compared to 46% in 1991.

“The overall survey results are encouraging because they show us that persistent efforts to get young people to adopt healthier behaviors can achieve positive results,” said Howell Wechsler, EdD, MPH, director of CDC’s division of adolescent and school health. “However, the results also illustrate some of the challenges. One, it does take persistence to achieve results. And two, despite the overall improvements in health behaviors of teens, racial and ethnic differences continue to exist.”

Compared with white and Hispanic high school students, black high school students are least likely to use tobacco, alcohol, cocaine and other drugs, but most likely to report sexual-risk behaviors and sedentary behaviors such as watching television three or more hours per day. White students are less likely than black or Hispanic high school students to report physical fighting, sexual-risk behaviors and being overweight, but more likely to engage in frequent cigarette smoking and episodic heavy drinking. Hispanic students are more likely than black or white students to report attempted suicide and the use of drugs like cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines.

“The reasons for these racial and ethnic differences are complex. More research is needed to assess the impact of education, socioeconomic status, environment, and cultural factors that may contribute to health risk behaviors among high school students,” Wechsler added.

National, state and local YRBSs are conducted every two years among high school students throughout the United States. These surveys monitor health risk behaviors that lead to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco, alcohol and other drug use; and sexual behaviors that can lead to unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. The surveys also measure high school students’ dietary behaviors and physical inactivity that can contribute to overweight.

The 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data are available at [www.cdc.gov/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/yrbs)



## Ecstasy Can Quickly Hurt Brain, Researchers Say

Human brain cells can be altered and damaged by low doses of Ecstasy, leading to reduced blood flow to the brain, researchers say.

Bloomberg News reported that a new study finds that even first-time users of Ecstasy experience a decrease in verbal memory, and that taking just a few doses of the drug causes brain changes that can be seen 18 months after first use.

“We don’t know if it’s reversible or permanent,” said researcher Maartje de Win of the University of Amsterdam, who presented the findings at a meeting of the Radiological Society of North America. “People should know there might be some consequences for them even after incidental use.”

The study included brain scans of 188 young adults considered at risk of Ecstasy use; initial scans were taken before any of the group had used the drug.

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