

Script – Print – When household sprays become a deadly health hazard

Medical experts are warning about a dangerous trend known as “dusting” or “huffing,” saying the practice can cause sudden death after a single use.

That was the case in 2025, when a 19-year-old woman from Arizona died after suffering sudden cardiac arrest from inhaling aerosol from a can of keyboard cleaner. Though less prevalent than other substances, huffing is considered one of the most dangerous forms of drug abuse. Because inhalants are readily available household products, they are cheap and easy to access.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there were 22,000 emergency room visits between 2012 and 2021 from dusting episodes. Common inhalants include gasoline, computer keyboard cleaners, deodorants, hair spray, whipped cream or anything that comes in an aerosol spray can.

[Alissa Bartel, APRN](#), is a nurse practitioner with OSF HealthCare. She says medical providers are seeing an increase in cases, especially in younger people looking for a high.

“They want to know what that feels like,” she says. “Unfortunately, it can cause brain damage. It can cause shortness of breath, wheezing and serious breathing complications that need to be addressed in an emergency department. It can also cause heart damage. So, these are really dangerous things, especially in our kids that could last their entire life.”

Bartel says social media has played a significant role in exposing people to dangerous trends such as dusting. She adds that it’s important to monitor your children’s online activities.

“Unfortunately, social media can expose our children, and adults as well, to very dangerous behaviors,” says Bartel. “The important thing for parents to understand is having open communication with their kids, making sure if you see something as a parent that concerns you, talk about it with your kids.”

Bartel says it’s never too early to have that conversation with your kids about trends like dusting. It’s a chat she has with her patients starting in fifth grade.

“Ask them if they’ve ever heard of things like that, or if they have any questions about things they’ve seen on social media,” she says. “Those are important pieces I always include in my well child visits.”

Bartel offers tips on what parents should look out for. “Parents should really look out for slurred speech, loss of consciousness, change in their behaviors, almost like a drunk-like behavior is sometimes what we’ll see,” she says.

Other signs to pay attention to include sores around the mouth, and red or itchy eyes. Becoming withdrawn or doing poorly in school can also be warning signs. Bartel says those are things that need to be evaluated further. And if parents can’t get to the bottom of it, it’s something that they should address with their primary care provider.

Parents should keep stock of what aerosols are found in the home. “Parents absolutely should be aware of some of these dangerous items that might be around their house,” she says. “They can either lock them up or just make sure they keep a close inventory on them, keep them out of the reach, especially of young children,” she says.

If you notice your child is having symptoms from what you suspect is huffing or some other drug overdoses, call 9-1-1 or take them to an emergency room immediately.