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ENTERTAINMENT

Nitrous Oxide: What is the 'Whip-it' Party Drug that Hospitalized Demi Moore?

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ON 01/26/12 AT 10:16 AM



Actress Demi Moore was hospitalized on Monday, Jan. 23, after suffering a seizure during an evening spent inhaling dangerous amounts of nitrous oxide, also known as "whip-its." Moore's friend called the paramedics after the actress "lapsed into semi-consciousness," according to TMZ. The 49-year-old actress reportedly exhibited symptoms of a seizure after inhaling the gas. Photo: Reuters

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What exactly is nitrous oxide?

Nitrous oxide, more commonly known as laughing gas, is a chemical compound formula use in surgery and dentistry for its anesthetic properties. It is known as laughing gas because of its euphoric effects. The nitrous oxide is a gas inhalant.

What is a whip-it?

A whip-it is a small metal canister, often used to recharge whipped cream cans in restaurants, that is used by high-seekers to extract the compressed nitrous oxide. Individuals inhale the nitrous oxide to achieve a euphoric feeling. Whip-it is the common street term. Other street names for inhalants include: laughing gas (nitrous oxide), snappers (amyl nitrite), poppers (amyl nitrite and butyl nitrite), whippets (fluorinated hydrocarbons, found in whipped cream dispensers), bold (nitrites), and rush (nitrites).

It is used as a means to get high, most often by adolescents who want a cheap, quick thrill. Teenagers can easily buy such canisters over-the-counter at supermarkets. Whip-its sell at Wal-Mart. according to The NY Daily News.

Who typically abuses inhalants?

Inhalants are often among the first drugs that young adolescents abuse. In fact, they are one of the few classes of substances that are abused more by younger adolescents than older ones. Inhalant abuse can become chronic and continue into adulthood, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse.

The NIDA reports that inhalant abuse, such as with nitrous oxide, is most common amongst 7th through 9th graders. In the Monitoring the Future study, an annual NIDA-supported survey of the nation's middle school students, 8th graders regularly report the highest rate of current, past-year, and lifetime inhalant abuse compared to 10th and 12th graders. In 2010, 8 percent of 8th graders, 5.7 percent of 10th graders, and 3.6 percent of 12th graders reported abusing inhalants in the year prior to the survey.

One of the problems noted in the 2010 survey was 39 percent of 8th graders don't consider the regular use of inhalants to be harmful, and 64 percent don't think trying inhalants once or twice is risky. Young teens may not understand the risks of inhalant use as well as they should.

Other times, fumes can be sprayed into a bag and inhaled (bagging) or practiced by sniffing from an inhalant-soaked cloth. According to the NIDA, the high from inhalants only lasts a few minutes so individuals will maintain their high by repeatedly inhaling the fumes over several hours.

Physical Effects

Inhalants produce similar initial effects to those from alcohol, such as slurred speech, lack of coordination, euphoria and dizziness, according to the NIDA. However, inhalants can have seriously damaging long-term effects. Those who use inhalants long term can suffer brain damage, heart damage, liver failure and muscle weakness. Long-term use can also permanently damage the peripheral nerves.

The sudden sniffing death refers to heart failure that leads to death within minutes. This is often associated with the abuse of butane, propane, and chemicals in aerosols.

Demi's Downward Spiral

Those close to the Demi Moore have noticed troubled signs over the past few weeks, since the actress split from 33-year-old husband Ashton Kutcher, reported [The Chicago Sun-Times](#).

Everything she's been doing the past couple of months have exasperated some long-simmering problems in Demi's life, a close friend said Wednesday. Obviously, there's the stress of her marriage collapsing. But she's always been crazy-obsessed about her weight and, I'm sorry to say, become too dependent on all kinds of medications.

Another source noted Moore's obsession with youth.

You've heard about someone having a 'daddy' complex. Well, Demi has a 'daughter' complex. She's a great mom but relates so closely to her daughters, she's more like a pal than a parent. She is so into all their interests and habits, added the second source.

Perhaps this youth obsession added to her whip-it use.

Demi Moore was rushed to an L.A. hospital on Monday night and then checked into a treatment facility. Her rep said that she was seeking professional assistance to treat her exhaustion and improve her overall health.

However, [RadarOnline](#) reported that the star is getting treatment for anorexia and substance abuse.

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