

When Girls and Women Sniff



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing







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Acknowledgements

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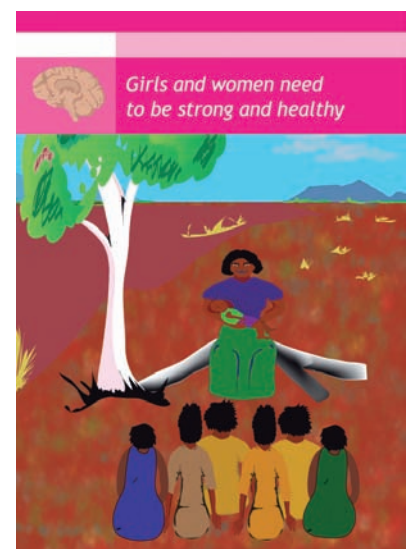
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Girls and women need to be strong and healthy

- Women and young girls have an important role in the family and community.
- They need to look after their minds and their bodies to make them strong and healthy.
- Strong healthy women will have strong healthy babies.
- Women need to look after their families, to make sure they eat healthy food, and go to school or work, do sport or go hunting, so that they grow up strong, healthy and happy.
- Strong healthy women can support their families and teach their family members to also be strong and healthy.
- It is important for older women to teach younger women how to be strong and healthy and how to support their family and their communities.
- Women can study or do important jobs in the community.
- Women can be great role models!





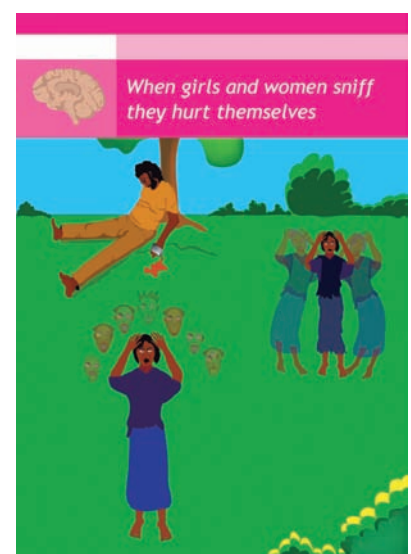
*Girls and women need
to be strong and healthy*





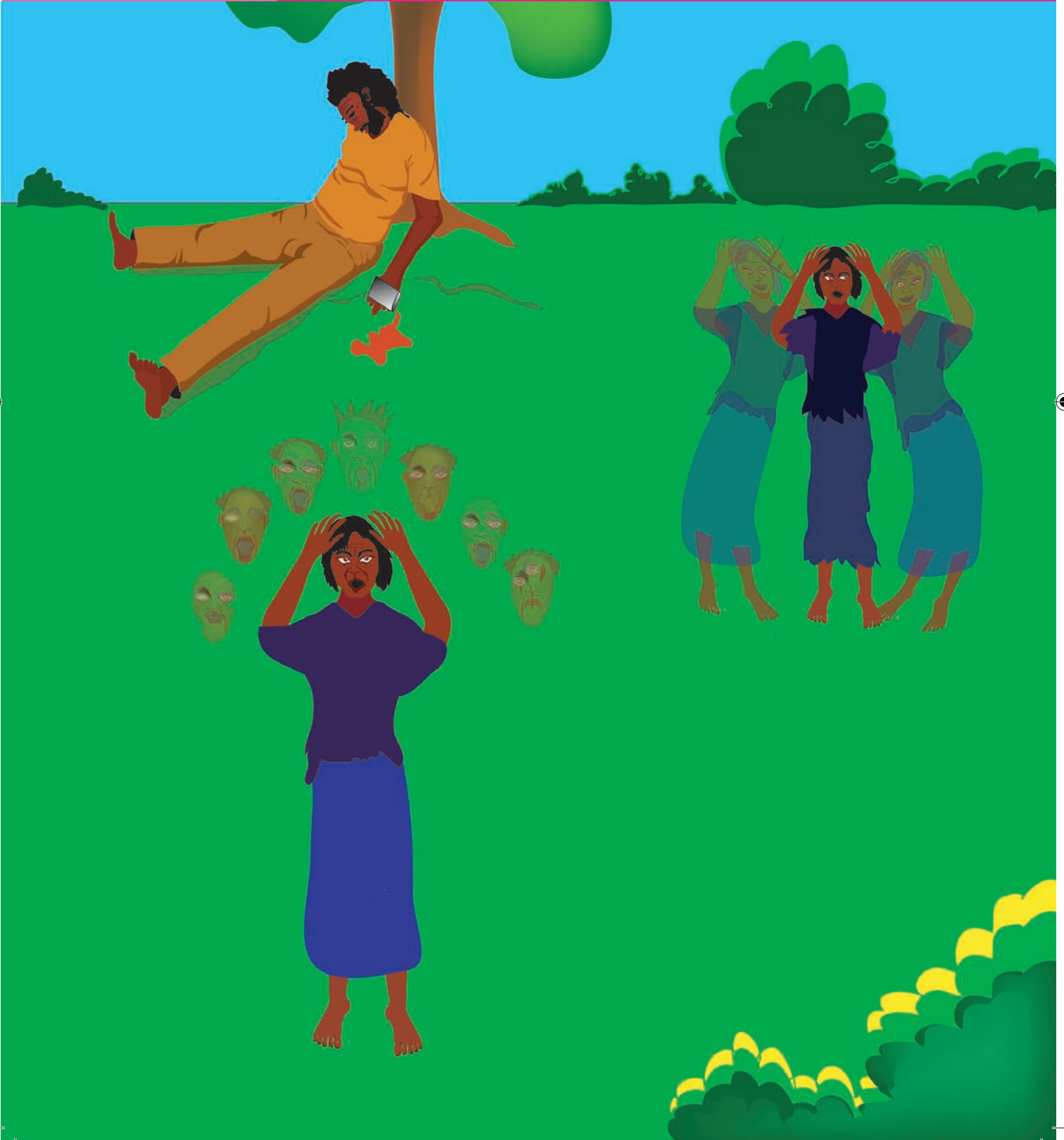
When girls and women sniff they hurt themselves

- Sometimes girls and women sniff petrol or other chemicals that make them feel high.
- These chemicals (like petrol, glue and paint) are called 'inhalants' or 'solvents'.
- Sniffing does a lot of damage that can last a long time, and only makes people feel high for a short time.
- The damage from sniffing can last for a long time, sometimes for years and years and sometimes forever.
- When girls sniff they can't control their minds and their bodies.
- They can't think properly and they don't really know what they are doing.
- They can do things they don't really want to do but can't stop themselves.
- They might take other drugs or drink grog as well as sniffing and this makes them lose even more control.
- Sniffing and taking other drugs can make some girls and women get upset, angry and violent or see things that aren't there.
- They might try and hurt themselves or hurt someone else, including family or friends.
- Many sniffers have killed themselves or tried to kill themselves.
- Sniffing can make people more likely to get a mental illness like psychosis, anxiety or depression.





When girls and women sniff they hurt themselves





When girls and women sniff they hurt the whole community

- Sniffing not only hurts the person sniffing but it hurts the sniffers' family and the whole community and then it's a problem for everyone.
- The sniffing is addictive so they want to do it more and more even though it's no good for them.
- When girls are sniffing they can't concentrate at school. They damage their brains so they can't learn properly and can't remember things. This also makes it hard for the people around them to learn at school.
- They stop going to school and they don't get an education.
- They don't turn up to work or can't work properly.
- They can't care for their family any more and they can't even look after themselves.
- They don't eat healthy food or do sport, participate in the community and do all the things that make women strong and healthy.
- When girls sniff they look unhealthy and skinny and then the boys don't think they look any good.
- They might break into places or steal things and then they get in trouble with the police and can go to jail.
- People in the community can be scared of sniffers.





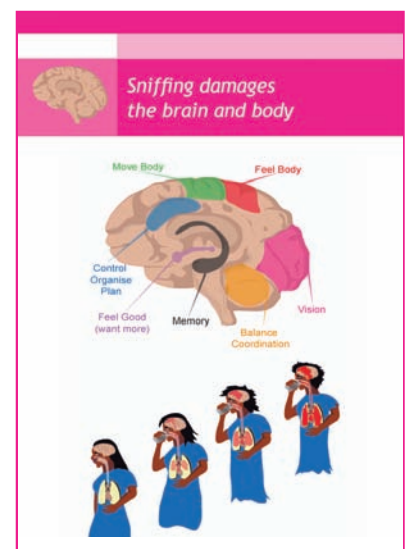
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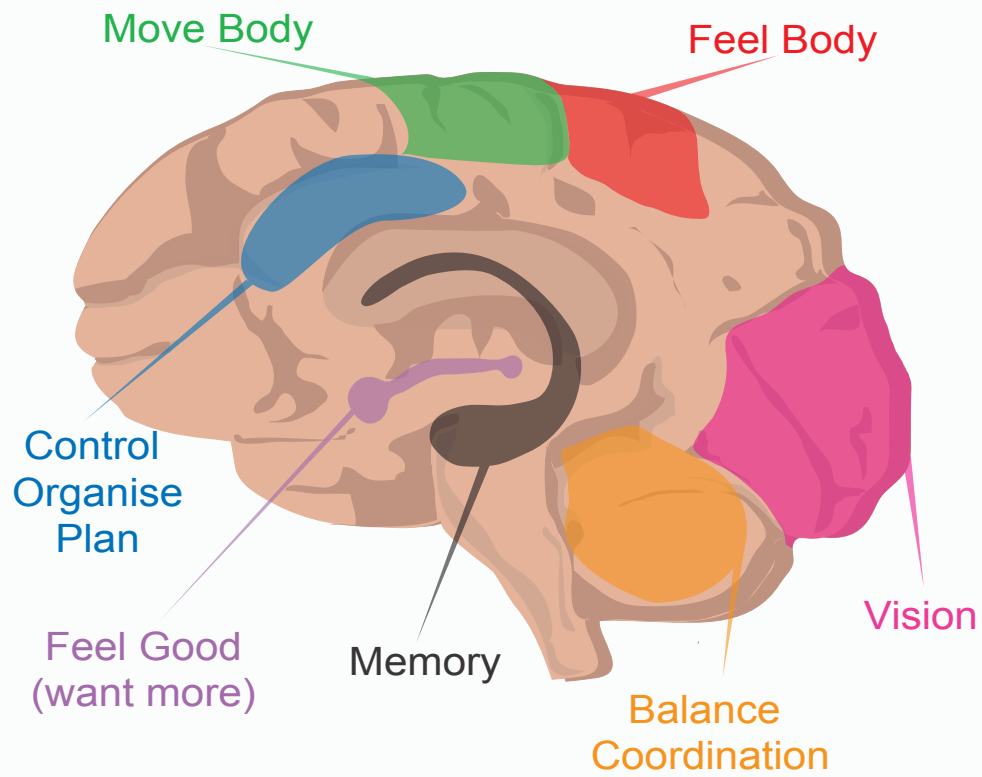
Sniffing damages the brain and body

- Sniffing, especially when you are young, can damage your brain and body permanently.
- People can also die suddenly because they don't have enough oxygen getting to their brain when they sniff.
- Sniffing damages the brain and body in many ways. Some of the damage can get better when the person stops sniffing, but the longer they sniff, the less chance they have of getting better.
- Sniffing damages the brain and makes it difficult to see and hear things properly, control your actions and feelings, concentrate, learn new things, remember anything or walk and talk properly.
- Sniffing also damages other organs in the body like the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.
- Sniffing makes the heart work extra hard and sometimes people can die suddenly because their heart is under too much pressure.
- When girls or women sniff they can damage the sex or reproductive organs in their body. If the damage is bad enough they may not be able to become pregnant.
- Sniffing damages the 'immune system' of the body. The immune system helps your body fight off disease and infection so if you sniff you will probably get sick a lot.
- Another way sniffers damage their bodies is from burns or accidents that happen while they are high from sniffing.





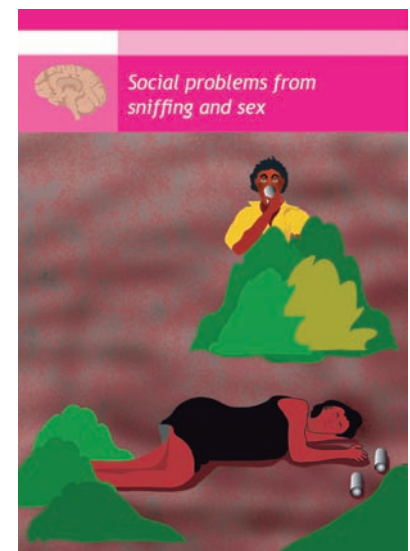
Sniffing damages the brain and body





Social problems from sniffing and sex

- When girls and women sniff, their mind and body gets weak and they can't protect themselves properly.
- They have less control over what they are doing.
- They might end up having sex with someone they didn't want to have sex with, and later wish they didn't do it.
- They could even get pregnant from having sex when they were sniffing and then not want the baby, but it's too late.
- Sometimes when girls are sniffing they can have sex with someone from the wrong skin and their families won't help them if they have a baby.
- It can be dangerous to hang around people who are sniffing. They can't control themselves and can be violent and abusive.
- Some men will offer or give girls or women something to sniff and will then assault them because the men know the girls or women will have less control over themselves.
- Sometimes when girls sniff they have been victims of sexual assault or rape because they can't protect themselves properly.
- Some girls have been victims of sexual assault or violence by men who were sniffing.





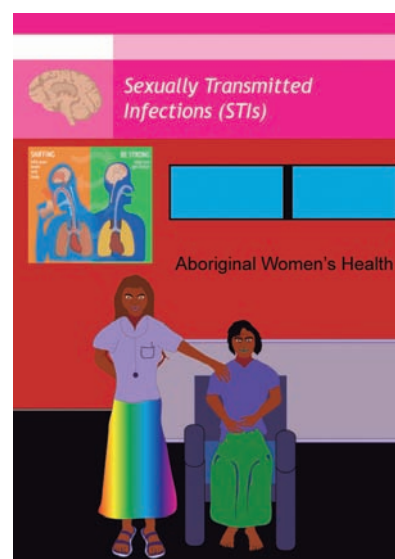
Social problems from sniffing and sex





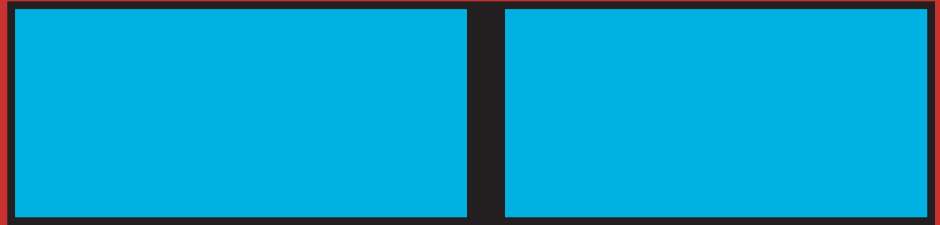
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- When men and women sniff they can get a strong desire for sex. They can't control themselves so they may have sex without thinking too much or be forced to have sex when they didn't want to.
- When people are in these situations they are more likely to have 'unsafe' sex, or sex without a condom. This way, they may get pregnant but they are also more likely to get sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- STIs are spread through unprotected sexual contact.
- Many sniffers or victims of sexual assault get STIs.
- This can also happen with too much grog (alcohol).
- STIs are a problem everywhere in the world but they can be prevented and treated.
- Some STIs that you may have heard of are syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and donovanosis.
- Some other types of STIs are HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, genital warts and genital herpes.
- You may not know that you have a STI because often there are no symptoms.
- This is a problem because with most STIs you can get better if you find them and treat them early. If you don't know you have them and don't get treatment, they can lead to other diseases like cancer and pregnancy problems.
- Making sure your partner wears a condom when you have sex is the safest way to stop you from getting a STI.
- If you have had sex without a condom, you should get a test at the clinic as soon as possible to find out if you have a STI.





Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



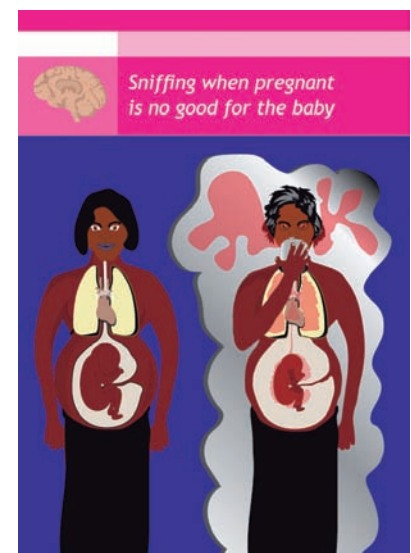
Aboriginal Women's Health





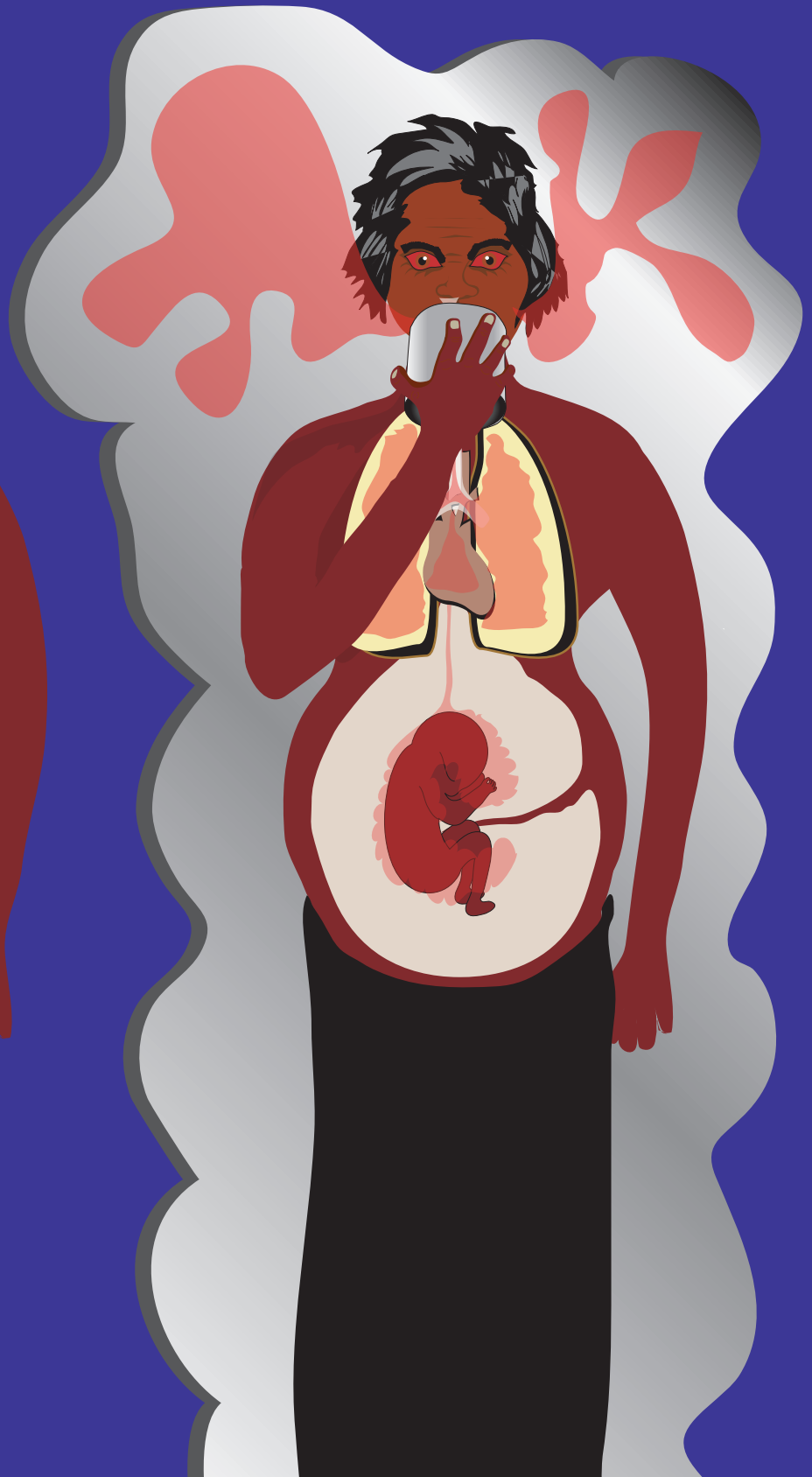
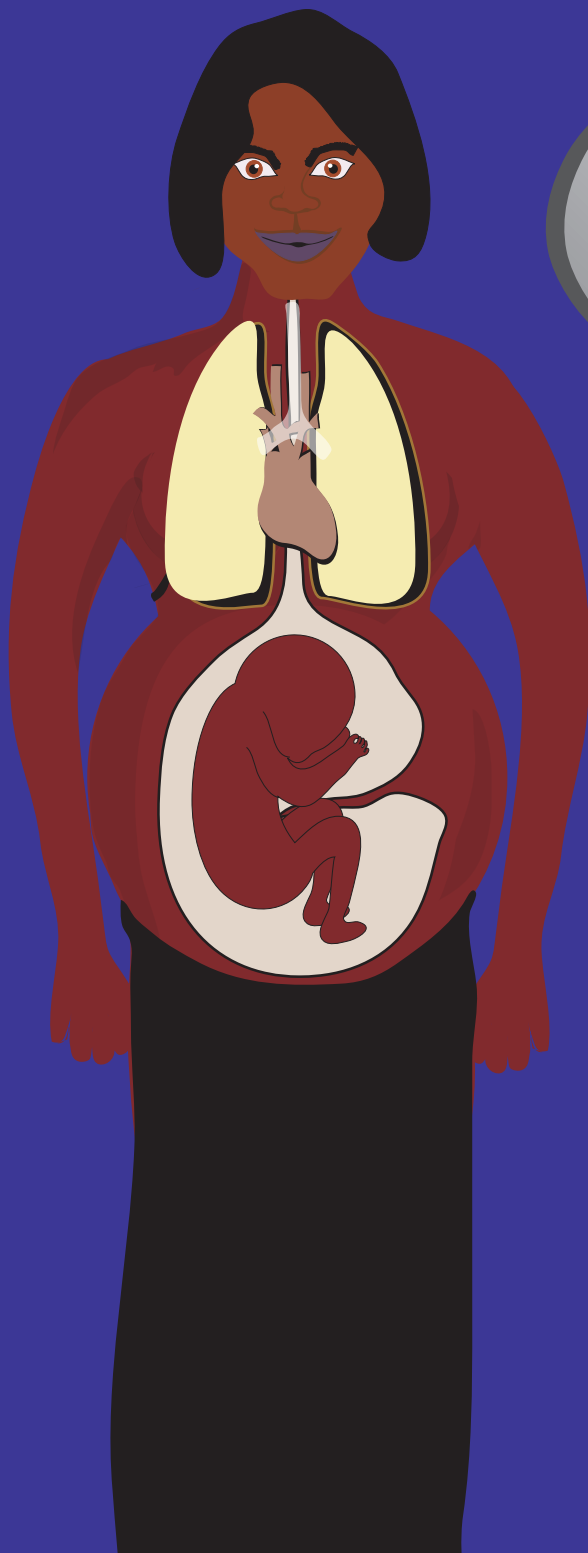
Sniffing when pregnant is no good for the baby

- You should not sniff when you are pregnant but some girls and women still do.
- If a women is pregnant and sniffing, the strong chemicals go into her lungs, her blood and her brain and make her feel 'high'.
- These chemicals also get into the baby's lungs, blood and brain and cause damage.
- The baby (also called the 'foetus') isn't big or strong enough to fight off these strong chemicals.
- These chemicals stop the baby from getting enough oxygen and it can die. This is called spontaneous abortion.
- If the baby doesn't die, the lack of oxygen can permanently damage the baby's brain.
- Some mothers make their baby sniff petrol after they are born to stop them from crying. This also stops the oxygen from getting to the baby's blood and can permanently damage the baby.
- If you know someone who is sniffing when they are pregnant, or giving their baby petrol to sniff, talk to them about the dangers to their baby. See if you can support them to stop the sniffing.
- If you are not sure what to do speak to the doctor, clinic nurse, health worker or youth worker.





Sniffing when pregnant is no good for the baby





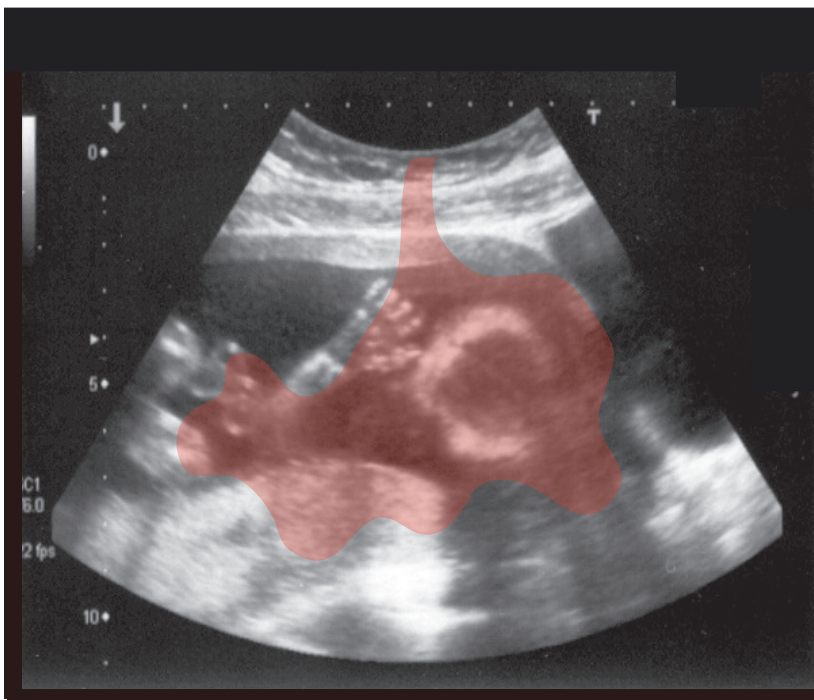
Foetal Solvent Syndrome (FSS)

- If a mother sniffs when she is pregnant, she can damage her child permanently.
- If the mother has been sniffing when she is pregnant, and the baby survives, it can have a sickness called 'foetal solvent syndrome' (FSS).
- 'Solvent' or 'inhalant' is another word for stuff you can sniff to feel high like petrol, glue and paint.
- Babies with this sickness can be delivered too early. They are too small and are at risk of dying.
- The baby can also be physically deformed. The shape of their heads can change and they might not be able to move properly.
- The baby can have lots of trouble breathing and get sick really easily.
- Later as the baby gets older, their brains might not grow as well as other kids, whose mothers did not sniff.
- These children will have problems learning and understanding new things.
- They can have memory problems and have trouble at school.
- These children need extra support at school and in the community.





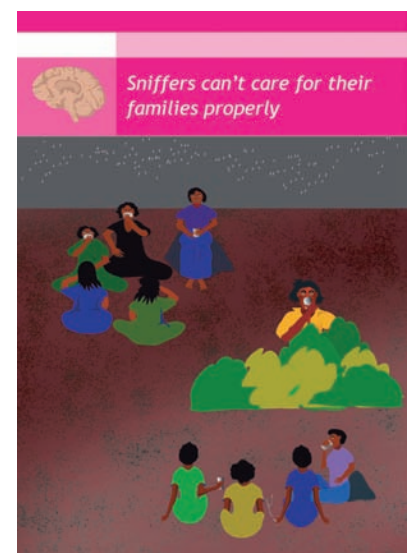
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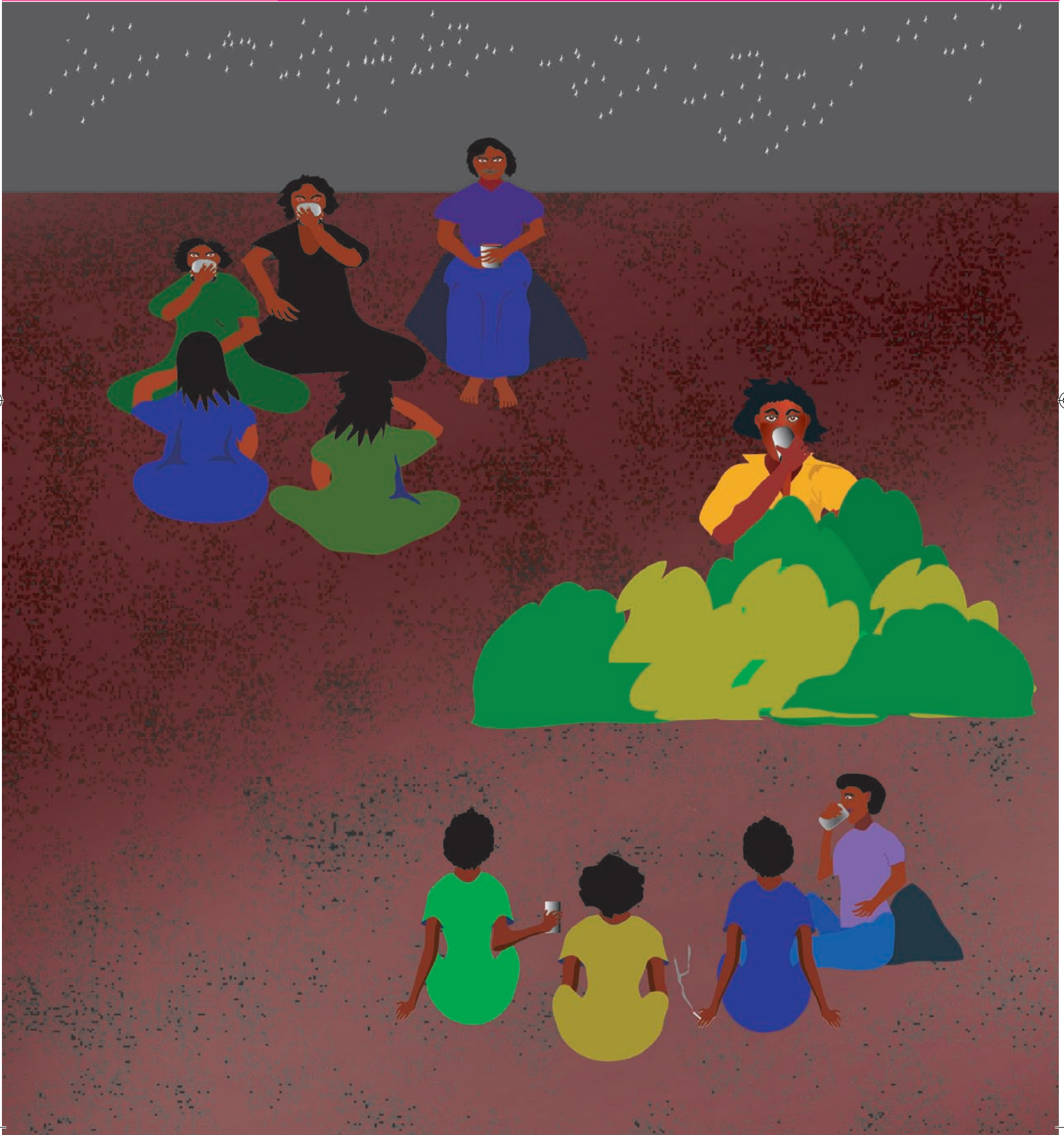
Sniffers can't care for their families properly

- When girls or women sniff, they are hurting their brains and bodies and are not healthy.
- They can't think properly and don't know what they are doing.
- Girls and women who sniff can't get healthy food to feed their families, and can't remember what they need to do to care for their families.
- When this happens, their families and their children suffer.
- The children of sniffers can get sad and lonely and think their parents don't love them. These children may sniff themselves to help them feel better.
- Sometimes the children might try sniffing or smoking gunja or other drugs because they are copying their parents or their older brothers and sisters.
- Parents who sniff are not able to protect their children from harm.
- Children of sniffers have often been victims of sexual abuse or violence from older children or adults, because their parents were sniffing and did not protect them.





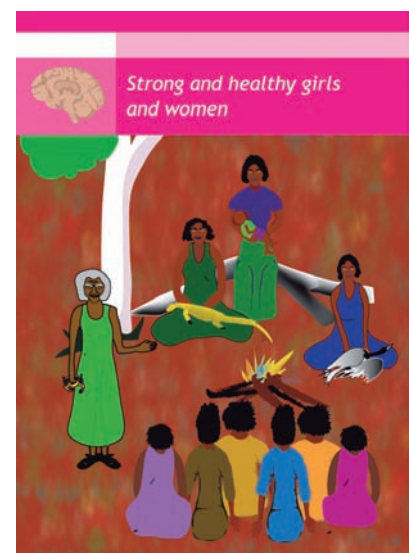
Sniffers can't care for their families properly





Strong and healthy girls and women

- It is important for girls and women to look after themselves and their families. They can't do this when they sniff.
- Girls and women can choose to be strong and healthy.
- They can be good role models for their families and their communities.
- They can show their people how to do healthy things that make them feel good.
- This information is about sniffing inhalants like petrol, glue and paint but other drugs like gunja (marijuana), grog (alcohol), kava and cigarettes also damage your health and hurt your children, your families and your community.
- Sniffing hurts everybody - even people in the community who don't sniff.
- Everybody can and should work together to reduce the damage caused by sniffing.
- Sniffers need love and support to stop sniffing.
- Strong women can help other girls and women to become strong and healthy.





Strong and healthy girls and women

