

SYNTHETIC DRUGS

What are they?

Synthetic drugs are products containing chemical substances artificially developed to mimic the effects of illegal drugs like cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine.

They come in the form of powders, pills and dried herbs that have been soaked in synthetic chemicals. They are often sold online and through adult stores and tobacconists.

These drugs are often promoted or sold as if they are harmless and are called names like herbal highs, party pills, herbal ecstasy or bath salts.

Many new psychoactive substances are illegal because of the potential risk of harm they pose.

What do we know?

These emerging or new synthetic drugs are so new that they have rarely or never been tested. This means that, if you experiment with these drugs, you will be at risk of serious harm because:

- *you don't know where they came from*
- *you don't know what chemicals and other compounds are in them*
- *you don't know how you might react to them – and you can't assume that just because you didn't have a bad reaction last time then you are safe*
- *you don't know how they might react to other substances you have taken including alcohol or other drugs*
- *you don't know that the drug will be the same strength or same drug you had last time*

Is there a safe level of use?

No. Because these drugs are being changed all the time by those who produce them, don't think you know, or can be confident about, the drug just because the packaging and name are the same. These drugs may even change from batch to batch.

It is estimated that a new synthetic drug is being produced and marketed every week; this means that it is unlikely that you will know what you are using or what the compounds will do to you and your friends.

You also can't assume that you will have the same experience as the last time you used the drug - you could even be putting yourself at greater risk of overdose or even death.

It is dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery under the influence of drugs. Even low doses of drugs can affect your concentration, coordination and reflexes, and your ability to make sensible decisions. Using new psychoactive substances can also increase risk-taking and careless behaviors.

The only way to guarantee your safety is not to use these substances – there is no guaranteed safe level of use.

If you or someone you know consumes a synthetic or psychoactive drug and gets into trouble, you should immediately call the "000" emergency help line.

What harm can they cause?

Just because people sell you these drugs openly in shops and on the internet, it does not mean that they won't harm you.

These substances can be very dangerous and affect your mental and physical well being both in the short and longer term. People have died from using these substances and even small doses can impair your memory and capacity to think clearly.

If you use these substances, the following could happen to you:

Brain health

- *Agitation and confusion*
- *Alteration of time perception*
- *Hallucinations*
- *Aggression and violence*
- *Unpredictable behaviour*
- *Amnesia*

Physical health

- *Hypertension (high blood pressure)*
- *Headache*
- *Weakness*
- *Nausea and vomiting*
- *Seizures*
- *Overdose*
- *Death*

Mental health

- *Anxiety*
- *Acute psychosis*
- *Paranoia*

Synthetics and the law

Because of the potential risk of harm from using them, NSW has now introduced a range of laws that prohibit the sale, supply, manufacture and advertisement of all new psychoactive substances, as well as the possession of many such substances.

Under the Road Transport Act 2013 police have the power to require drivers suspected of being under the influence of drugs to submit to blood and/or urine tests at a hospital. If you are convicted of driving under the influence of a drug, you could lose your license, get a fine or go to prison.

For information on penalties for drug offences regarding prohibited new psychoactive substances go to www.police.nsw.gov.au/syntheticdrugs

Where can I get help or more information?

For more information you can contact:
Drug & Alcohol Information Service (ADIS) on 1800 422 599 or (02) 9361 8000

www.yourroom.com.au - for information about a wide range of drugs and how they can affect people, side effects, withdrawal, and how to get help for yourself or for anyone who needs it.