

NPS-NEW/NOVEL PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES; previously 'Legal Highs'



These are drugs that have mind altering properties (psychoactive). They previously were commonly known as legal highs (herbal highs) because some of them were legal to buy, and in the past were on occasions being sold by shops in the High Street, claiming that they were 'bath salts', not for human consumption. Typical examples include 'Mamba', 'Black Mamba', 'Spice', 'Space Cadet' and a multitude of other slang/brand names. They were often packaged in attractive foil packs with chemical compound names quoted on the back; these were rarely what was in the pack, and sometimes was just made up to look scientific.

The fact that they were 'legal' did not mean that they were ever safe to take, and have always been highly variable in consistency and in effect, as well as in potentially harmful effects, including

- Sweats and shaking
- Irregular heartbeat, variation of blood pressure
- Increased or decreased appetite, weight loss
- Anxiety and agitation, including acute behaviour disturbance
- Paranoid feelings and beliefs, including presenting with acute paranoid psychosis
- Dizziness and blurring of consciousness, but also can cause a lack of sleep
- Stomach pains, vomiting
- Kidney pain/damage, bladder damage, difficulty urinating
- Coma
- On occasions, death



OVERDOSE AND EMERGENCY TREATMENT

Signs meaning that it is likely to be an emergency include:

Hyperthermia (Overheating)

- Seizures/ Fitting
- Severe Nausea and Vomiting
- Deterioration in Consciousness/ Unconscious
- Rapid/ Irregular Heart Rate/ Chest Pain
- Hallucinations/ Delusions/ Psychotic Beliefs

Sometimes people may present with Serotonin Syndrome/Toxicity

This is characterised by rigid and unusual twitchy/jerky movements and dilated pupils. If this happens, don't try and hold down the person or restrict movement. Be careful not to startle a person in this state.

DO

Shout for help

Call 999

Be honest and give accurate history

**Stay with the person
bath/shower**

**If they are unconscious, put them in
the recovery position**

**If they stop breathing, perform chest
compressions (CPR)**

**If it is suspected that they have used heroin,
or they're on methadone/buprenorphine
and you have access to it, administer Naloxone**

DON'T

Leave them

Give them stimulants

Inflict Pain

Put them in a cold bath

bbc.co.uk

Rise in deaths from 'legal highs' in the UK

By Tulip Mazumdar
Global health reporter

🕒 12 February 2014 | **Health**



Richard Phillips (right) with his brother Byron, was left brain damaged after taking a legal high

The number of UK deaths linked to so-called "legal highs" has risen in recent years - from 10 in 2009 to at least 68 in 2012, figures show.

THE LAW

The government brought in the Psychoactive Substances Bill on 26th May 2016. The Bill made it an offence to supply any psychoactive substance with the exception of nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, drink products and medicinal products. Put simply, any substance that can get you 'high', regardless of its potential for harm, is illegal to produce or supply (up to 7 years imprisonment). It is also illegal to possess in prison or any other custodial institution.

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE NPS?

Many have taken to using NPS because they were easily available, either via the internet or before the change in the law, from 'head shops'. There was also a myth that these drugs were 'safer' than traditional illicit drugs. This of course is wrong and in many ways it is more unpredictable what the effects of NPS are. Often they will lead to unpredictable effects/side effects that lead to hospitalisation, due to medical or mental health complications.

Sometimes people choose to use NPS in preference to traditional substances because they say that they like the effect and it's relatively cheap. Effects include euphoria, sedation, relaxation, altered perception, increased confidence, to name but a few. This will vary, depending on how much is taken, whether it is mixed with other substances, including alcohol and nicotine, and the mental state of the person. Obviously using them together with other substances, potentially raises the risks of serious side effects.

INDEPENDENT

The 20-year-old had been hospitalised after taking legal highs at Kendal Calling – friend Christian Pay died

Loulla-Mae Eleftheriou-Smith |
Sunday 9 August 2015 | **13** comments





WHO IS USING NPS?

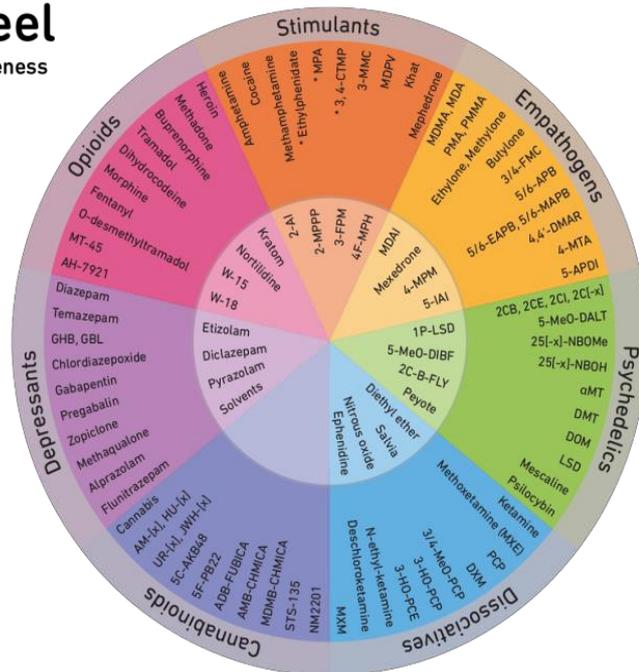
People from all walks of society and of all ages are using NPS. There are particular groups that are identified as being especially vulnerable. These includes particularly people with mental illness, people who are homeless, young people and people in recovery from using other addictive substances.



The Drugs Wheel

A new model for substance awareness

UK version 2.0.3 14/12/2016



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Designed in collaboration with DrugWatch, an informal association of charities, organisations and individuals who share an interest in establishing a robust early warning system in the UK for all types of drugs.

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Outer ring: Controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 or The Human Medicines Regulations 2012

Inner ring: Controlled under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 * Temporary Class Drug Order

WITHDRAWAL

When someone stops taking drugs, or takes a reduced amount, they may experience withdrawal.

Withdrawal symptoms can include seizures, sickness and diarrhoea, headaches, pains and hallucinations.

To reduce harm try a tapered reduction in substance use, rather than going 'cold turkey' and to help the body recover we would recommend a healthy diet, light exercise and lots of rest. If symptoms become too much seek medical help and **in an emergency call 999**.

DRUG INDUCED PSYCHOSIS

If you need to deal with a psychosis situation, make sure that you have minimised danger. Your safety is the priority and it is essential in this situation you get another person's help.

- Do not attempt to restrain the person. This can increase strain on the heart.
- Establish a safe environment and support them.
- Ask about their own resources for managing anxiety i.e. what have they done before?
- Use relaxation techniques e.g. breathing, relaxation etc.
- Try to maintain calmness (further stress can make symptoms worse)





HARM REDUCTION

General

- Plan how you are getting home before you start your night
- Don't use drugs alone and preferably with a 'straight/sober' friend
- Tell someone what you have taken
- Try not to accept/buy drugs from people you don't know
- Avoid mixing with other drugs, including alcohol
- If using for the first time or using a new batch/packet take a test dose first
- Start by taking small amounts – this might be half a pill, one small line, a single joint
- Pace yourself and wait at least two hours before taking any more
- Keep hydrated, drink small sips of water (about one pint per hour)
- If experiencing issues with jaw clenching chew gum or soft sweets
- Take regular breaks when dancing
- Use safe sex practices
- If you start to feel unwell, get medical assistance, be honest about what has been taken
- If the effects are too extreme try to relax and take small sips of flat sugary juice
- If the person taking drugs is sleeping or unconscious place them in the recovery position (on their side)
- If you are looking to cut down your use do so gradually to reduce withdrawal symptoms
- Try to have a few drink/drug free days a week to allow your body to recover
- Get regular health check-ups and tests for blood borne viruses (e.g. hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV)

In addition the following harm reduction advice can be used when using certain routes of administration:

Smoking

- If using rolling papers use as little paper as possible
- Use low strength tobacco
- Use a non-printed, long roach
- Avoid holding smoke in your lungs as this can damage tissue
- Use glass or metal pipes where as these give off less fumes than wood and plastic
- If smoking from foil use clean foil each time. This is available from needle exchanges



Snorting

- Grind substances before snorting (some new drugs are harsher and more crystalline than traditional drugs)
- Use a straw as a 'tooter/snorter' rather than money and throw away after use
- Position the 'tooter/snorter' as high up the nostril as possible
- Don't share your 'tooter/snorter' with anyone else (this could spread viruses)
- Alternate nostrils
- Rinse out your nose with water afterwards. Some powders, like ketamine, clump in the nose and drip down the throat. Where possible spit this out as it won't improve your experience but may cause more harm

Injecting

This route of administration poses the highest risk.

- Only use clean needles and supplies. Free, clean needles are available from needle exchanges services. Alternatively they can be bought online
- Follow good hygiene practice and wash injection sites (before and after)
- Always filter your drugs
- Use a fresh needle if you fail to find a vein first time; needles are blunt after one use
- Never share equipment (inc. needles, filters, containers, spoons and water)
- Do not use citric acid or heat to dissolve NPS if it is not needed.
- Use the smallest needle you can without it becoming blocked
- Rotate injection sites
- Dispose of needles responsibly. These can be returned to a needle exchange
- Seek medical assistance if site becomes painful, tender or hot, or there is swelling

If you need further information or Help with Drugs

If you need help with drugs, or know someone else who does, call our free confidential 24/7 helpline or pop in and see us.

Call 0300 200 2400 (or 0300 123 3360 for Young People's services)

Email: talktous@recoverynearyou.org.uk

5-9 Pitt Street, Market Square, Wolverhampton WV3 0NF

recoverynearyou.org.uk





APPENDIX: The list below is an overview of the most commonly used new drugs. The list is not exhaustive and information can only be considered current on the date of issue.

[Ethylphenidate]

- Ethylphenidate (eth-il-fen-i-date) is found in branded packets such as Burst and Ching. It was one of the most commonly found substances in research chemical powders.
- Ethylphenidate is a stimulant (upper) drug closely related to methylphenidate (brand name Ritalin). Effects include increased energy and rapid heart rate as well as increased sociability and sex drive. People taking it can experience restlessness, panic attacks, insomnia, pain and an urge to re-dose.
- It comes in a white crystalline powder which is usually snorted or swallowed in a cigarette paper (bombed). An average dose for snorting will give around 25 lines from a gram (this dose should not be taken as a recommendation). Snorting can cause damage to the nasal passages. Snorting can cause a more intense experience although effects tend to last longer when the drug is swallowed.

[Etizolam]

- Etizolam (et-iz-o-lam) is a very strong benzodiazepine (downer) drug which has a sedative effect and can cause long periods of sleep and drowsiness. It also slows down your heart rate and breathing. People taking it can feel calm but they may have experiencing short term memory loss, reduced mental alertness and double vision.
- It often comes in 1 mg (blue) or 2 mg (pink) 'pellet like' pills which are usually swallowed or left to dissolve in the mouth and doses as little as 0.5 mg can have the desired effect (this dose should not be taken as a recommendation).

[MDAI]

- MDAI first became available online in 2009 as a legal alternative to MDMA. 'Sparkle' and 'Sparkle Gold' are examples of branded packaging claiming to contain MDAI. Some users report MDMA-like effects.



- MDAI is similar to MDMA but less potent and with less stimulant effects and therefore MDAI is commonly found mixed with stimulant NPS in branded packets. It can make you feel a rush through your body and head, often experienced as a tingling sensation and it also increases your heart rate and blood pressure. People taking it can experience a mild high, relaxation and increased enjoyment of music as well as stomach cramps, short term memory loss and problems sleeping.
- It comes in a white or tan/brown powder with a crystalline look, or in capsule form. The powder is often wrapped in cigarette paper and swallowed (bombed), 'dabbed' by finger, or diluted in orange juice which is said to minimise the bad taste. An average dose for swallowing will give around 10 bombs from a gram (this dose should not be taken as a recommendation).

[Mephedrone]

- Mephedrone (mef-i-drone) also known as Drone, M-CAT, Magic and Meph, appeared on the market in 2007 and rapidly became the fourth most popular drug in the UK.
- Mephedrone is a stimulant (upper) drug similar to MDMA, amphetamine and cocaine which can give you a rush and make you feel high. It also increases your heart rate and breathing. People taking it can experience a feeling of 'coming up', alertness and an intense connection with music as well as cravings to re-dose, intense sweating with an odour and insomnia.
- It comes in a fine or crystalline white powder and is usually snorted or swallowed either in a cigarette paper (bombed), in a capsule/pill or diluted in juice. An average dose for snorting will give around 16 lines from a gram and for swallowing around 8 bombs from a gram (these doses should not be taken as recommendations).

[MPA (Methiopropamine)]

- Methiopropamine (meth-eye-o-prop-a-mein), also known as MPA, is found in many branded products such as China White. It appeared on the NPS market in 2010 and has grown in popularity since.
- Methiopropamine is a stimulant (upper) drug which can make you feel alert and more energetic. It also increases your heart rate and breathing. People taking it can experience a mild high, sexual arousal and loss of appetite as well as difficulty urinating (peeing), chest pain, breathing problems and an urge to re-dose.
- It comes in a fine white powder which is usually snorted or swallowed in a cigarette paper (bombed). An average dose for snorting will give around 50 lines from a gram and for
- swallowing around 25 bombs from a gram (these doses should not be taken as recommendations).

[Methoxiphenidine (MXP)]

- Methoxiphenidine (MXP) is a dissociative which can have a slight psychedelic effect that is somewhat similar to the illegal drug ketamine. MXP is usually snorted or swallowed (bombed). Snorting will mean the effects will come on more quickly than if swallowed (perhaps within 2-5 minutes). It is not recommended to inject MXP. The effects of the drug are dose dependant but include: feelings of euphoria, dissociation, time distortion, giggles, dizziness, loss of balance and numbed feeling or sensation.
- The anaesthetic qualities of MXP can make users more prone to injury and falls. Tolerance to MXP builds up quickly and those taking it regularly are likely to increase their dosage. Taking a 1-2 week break from use can reset tolerance. Since MXP has not widely been used for very long the toxic dose is not yet known and those who have switched from taking ketamine (or similar drugs) are recommended to start with a much smaller dose than they are used to.

[Nitrous Oxide]

- Nitrous oxide is a chemical commonly known as laughing gas or NOS. It was frequently used as a pain killer by dentists but can now most commonly be found in some food products (to keep them fresh) and is also sold in steel canisters or balloons and is usually inhaled.
- Nitrous oxide is a colourless gas. Some people say that it has a slightly sweet smell and taste.
- Because nitrous oxide is a pressurised gas in the canister, there is a risk of harm if you inhale nitrous oxide straight from the canister. This method can lead to sudden death due to a lack of oxygen and is one reason why nitrous oxide is sold to people in balloons.
- It is a dissociative drug which means it slows down your brain and your body's responses. The effects of nitrous oxide vary depending on how much has been inhaled but they include: feelings of euphoria, relaxation and calmness as well as dizziness, difficulty in thinking straight, altered hearing and fits of giggles/laughter. In higher doses it can also cause numb face/hands/feet and headaches as well as nausea and vomiting.
- Once inhaled the effects will normally occur within 15-30 seconds and the effects from a single breath of nitrous oxide will last between one and five minutes. Most people recommend one and five minutes between each dose allowing you to breathe normal air and restore oxygen levels.

[Synthetic Cannabinoids]

- Synthetic cannabinoids (sin-thet-ic can-a-bin-oids) contain chemicals such as 5F-AKB48 and PB-22. These chemicals target the same receptors as cannabis does in the brain and are often sprayed onto dried plant material. These are then packaged and sold by brand names such as Mamba, Black Mamba, Spice, Clockwork Orange, Voodoo and Psyclone.
- Synthetic cannabinoids can make you feel calm and relaxed. People taking them can experience a high, enhanced sensations and a feeling of heaviness as well as nausea, anxiety, paranoia, panic attacks and feeling withdrawn. People have also reported a strong urge to re-dose and an increase in mental health issues when using these substances.
- They come in a variety of herbal blends and occasionally as a white powder or oil. They are usually smoked with tobacco or other herbs in a joint or a bong. The dose varies depending on the contents and they are often much stronger than cannabis.





USEFUL NUMBERS

If you need Help with Drugs

If you need help with drugs, or know someone else who does, call our free confidential 24/7 helpline or pop in and see us.

Call 0300 200 2400 (or 0300 123 3360 for Young People's services)

Email: talktous@recoverynearyou.org.uk

5-9 Pitt Street, Market Square, Wolverhampton WV3 0NF
recoverynearyou.org.uk

111 is the non-emergency number, 24/7

Free from mobiles and land lines

URGENT CARE CENTRE (GP led service)

1st Floor at the Urgent and Emergency Care service at New Cross Hospital

PHOENIX WALK-IN CENTRE (Nurse led service for minor injuries, ailments and illnesses)

Phoenix Health Centre

Parkfields Road

Wolverhampton

WV4 6ED

Monday – Friday, 10am-4pm

Tel: 01902 444677

MINOR INJURIES UNIT

MIU at

Level One

Cannock Chase Hospital

Brunswick Road

Cannock

WS11 5XY

10.30am-6.30pm, 7 days a week

Tel: 01902 307999

999 ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

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Severe Burns/Scalds

Severe Allergic Reactions

Breathing Difficulties

Deterioration of conscious level

Fits and Acute Confusion