

SYNTHETIC DRUGS: THE FACTS

WHAT ARE SYNTHETIC DRUGS

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

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

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

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

These emerging or new synthetic drugs are so new that they have rarely or never been tested. We have seen an increasing number of severe poisons including death from people taking a new synthetic drug. 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 that you will be safe this time.

You don't know how you 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, you cannot 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 every time you use a synthetic drug you are putting yourself at risk of overdose or even death.

It is dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery under the influence of drugs. Even low dose 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.

SYNTHETIC RELATED EMERGENCY

If you or someone you know consumes a synthetic or psychoactive drug and gets into trouble, call "911" immediately.

WHAT HARM CAN THEY CAUSE?

Just because people sell you these drugs openly in shops and on the internet, it does not mean 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.

EFFECTS OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

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 behavior
- Amnesia

Physical Health

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

Mental Health

- Anxiety
- Acute Psychosis
- Paranoia

THE LAW

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

COMMON TYPES OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

- Synthetic cannabinoids:* Spice
- Phenethylamines:* Ecstasy, MDMA
- Benzodiazepines:* Xanax
- Opioid:* Fentanyl

NATIONAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES HELPLINE

1-800-662-HELP