

POLYDRUG USE

Taking more than one drug at a time is called polydrug use. Polydrug use increases the chance of overdose and increases risks of all the drugs taken.

OPIATE REPLACEMENT THERAPIES

Opiate replacement therapies, such as methadone and buprenorphine (Subutex), are man-made opioids which can be prescribed to replace the use of drugs such as heroin. They are pain-killing drugs which are risky in high doses, as they can reduce heart rate and breathing.

GABAPENTINIDS

Gabapentinoids, such as gabapentin and pregabalin can be prescribed for epilepsy and nerve pain. They can cause calmness and relaxation but high doses can be dangerous, especially when mixed with opioids.

BENZODIAZEPINES

Benzodiazepines, such as diazepam (Valium) can be prescribed for anxiety. Benzodiazepines slow down heart rate and breathing and can cause aggression, drowsiness, relaxation, memory loss and slowed speech.



SOURCES OF HELP

If you or your loved one would like help or support the following organisations can help:

Circle | For those with children | www.circle.scot | 0131 552 0305

Crew | Drugs information and support | www.mycrew.org.uk | 0131 220 3404

Families Outside | Help, advice and support for families of prisoners | www.familiesoutside.org.uk | 0800 254 0088

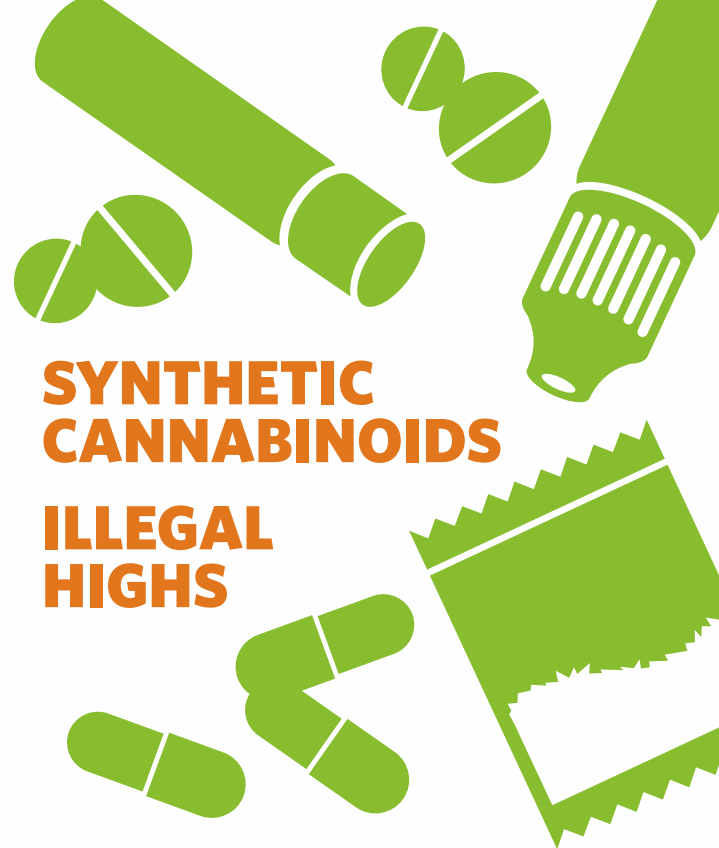
Scottish Drug Service Directory | Search local drug services | www.scottishdrugservices.com

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs | For those affected by others alcohol and/or drug use | www.sfad.org.uk | helpline@sfad.org.uk | 08080 101011



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SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

ILLEGAL HIGHS

A FRIEND AND FAMILY GUIDE TO PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES



SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

WHAT ARE THEY?

Synthetic cannabinoids (sin-the-tic can-a-bin-oids) are man-made drugs which target cannabinoid receptors in the brain. They are powdered chemicals which are dissolved and sprayed onto paper or dried plant material, hence the name "spice". The strength of the drug will vary and you get "hot spots", where the chemical is stronger at some parts than others.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

New cannabinoids are stronger than previous ones. The effects are more dangerous and unpredictable than cannabis. Effects include a short lived intense high, difficulty moving, feelings of heaviness, nausea and heart palpitations. Their use can also cause seizures and organ damage.

They are addictive and people report cravings to take more. Even in small doses, people who have no history of mental health issues report severe side effects including anxiety, paranoia, suicidal thoughts and depression.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

The Psychoactive Substances Act (2016) bans substances that produce a psychoactive effect (i.e. "legal highs"). Supply and possession is an offence in prison and penalties range from civil sanctions to a 7 year sentence. Many cannabinoids are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971).

The police are now taking an active role in prosecuting those who possess or take psychoactive substances in prison. They will seek the strongest penalties against those who are caught bringing or sending any drug into prison.

SPEAKING ABOUT DRUG USE

Synthetic cannabinoids have a devastating effect on the physical and mental health of the person taking it. Their use can cause bullying and violence, undermine security and safety and impact on the health and wellbeing of others. Residents who take these substances should be encouraged to stop and seek help from addiction support services as soon as possible.

If you or someone you know is under pressure to bring or send drugs to prison – don't do it. Speak to a member of staff. Anyone caught can receive a maximum prison sentence of 7 years.

It can be difficult to talk about someone's drug use but regular contact and support from family and friends can be a powerful motivator to change.

- Sometimes the person isn't ready, or doesn't want to speak about their drug use. You can test the water by asking, "Do you mind if we speak about drugs?"
- You don't have to address it directly; you can try asking, "I have heard this is being used in prison, have you heard about it?"
- If they take drugs ask them what they get from it, "What do you like about the drug? Are there any side effects?"

You can give them harm reduction information such as:

- Strong drugs are in circulation – start with a small test dose.
- Avoid sharing equipment as this can transmit infections.
- Keep hydrated, drink small sips of water (about half a pint per hour).
- Avoid mixing with other drugs including medicines.
- Sleep on your side.
- Get help in an emergency.
- Try to have at least a few drug free days a week to allow the body to recover.

THE RECOVERY POSITION

