

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. One packet or piece of paper may contain several different psychoactive substances.

Taking any synthetic cannabinoid may be harmful but the harms are increased when mixed with other drugs.

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.

GABAPENTINOIDS

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.

Mixing high doses of these drugs, can cause respiratory depression, which stops breathing.

If you are taking any drug on top of your medication, then your medication will be reviewed and may be stopped.



"When I was smoking spice I felt bad but when I wasn't smoking it I felt even worse. You can't win with these drugs. I'm glad I got help."

SOURCES OF HELP

Drugs can cause addiction and can impact your physical and mental health.

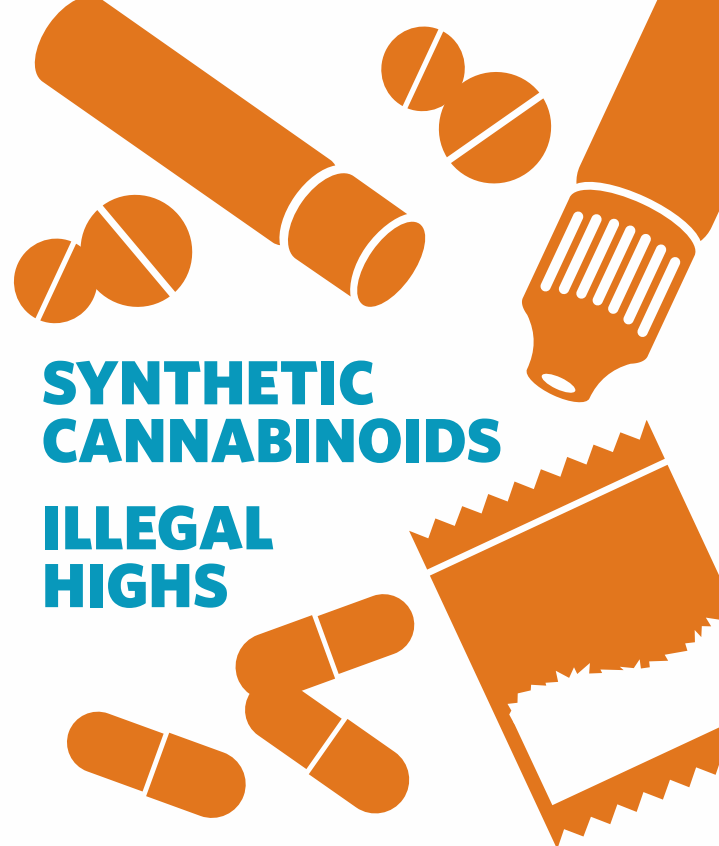
It's okay to ask for help.

In the first instance please speak to a member of staff or NHS addiction support services.



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SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

ILLEGAL HIGHS

A PRISONER'S 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. 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.

HARM REDUCTION

The best way to avoid drug harm is to not take them but if you or someone you know does take drugs the following information may help.

- 1 It is impossible to know what the drug is. The strength will vary between batches and certain parts of the packet or paper may be stronger than others. Start with a small test dose - this might be quarter of a pill, a few draws of a joint.
- 2 Avoid sharing equipment as this can transmit infections.
- 3 Pace yourself and wait a few hours before taking any more.
- 4 Keep hydrated, drink small sips of water (about half a pint per hour).
- 5 If jaw clenching or teeth grinding, chew soft sweets.
- 6 If the effects are too extreme try to stay relaxed and drink small sips of water or flat sugary juice.
- 7 If the person taking drugs is unconscious (not awake and not responding to sound or touch) tell a member of staff straight away.
- 8 If the person taking drugs is sleeping, place them in the recovery position (on their side) and check them frequently to ensure they are okay.
- 9 In an emergency get help and be honest about what has been taken.
- 10 Have at least a few drug free days a week to allow your body to recover.
- 11 If experiencing withdrawal symptoms try to avoid taking more drugs, get rest, eat and drink water. The severity of symptoms will reduce with time.

THE RECOVERY POSITION

- 1 Put the hand closest to you by the head (as if they were waving). 
- 2 Put the arm furthest away from you across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek. 
- 3 Hold the hand and lift up the knee furthest away from you, then turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee. 
- 4 Open their airway by gently tilting their head back and lifting their chin, and check that nothing is blocking their airway. 