

What are the risks?

Using synthetic cannabinoids has a number of risks

Psychological:

- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Feelings of excitement
- Mood swings
- Suicidal thoughts
- Memory problems and amnesia
- Hallucinations
- Psychotic episodes
- Mental illness
- Feeling agitated and aggressive
- Lack of motivation
- Disruption of sleep pattern

Physical:

- Light-headedness and dizziness
- Hot flushes
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Excessive sweating
- Numb or tingly fingers, toes or muscles
- Tremors, seizures and fits
- Acute kidney injury
- Risk of heart attack
- High fever
- Rapid pulse
- Confusion
- Death
- Tiredness
- Nausea and vomiting

Did you know?

The chemical composition of synthetic cannabinoids and the ingredients of smoking mixtures are changing all the time, so you can never be sure what you're getting, how powerful it is and how it could affect you.

Synthetic cannabinoids and the law

Synthetic cannabinoids are illegal (including brands like Black Mamba and Annihilation), are Class B drugs and are illegal to have, give away or sell.

If caught with synthetic cannabinoids, possible consequences could include a formal caution, arrest and prosecution.

A conviction for a drug-related offence could have a serious impact. It can stop you visiting certain countries – for example the United States – and limit the types of jobs you can apply for.

Find out more

If you would like more information or support on synthetic cannabinoids or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

Talk to Frank Website: www.talktofrank.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

NORTH: 01782 639856
StarsNorth@mpft.nhs.uk

EAST: 01283 741053
StarsEast@mpft.nhs.uk

WEST: 01785 270080
StarsWest@mpft.nhs.uk

Or visit: www.staffstars.org

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This leaflet was created by:  Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust Find out more at www.inclusion.org

Synthetic Cannabinoids

What you need to know!



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What are synthetic cannabinoids?

They are a growing number of man-made mind-altering chemicals.

- Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that have been developed to act like the main psychoactive chemical in cannabis, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which acts on cannabis receptors in the brain.
- Synthetic cannabinoids react more strongly with the brain's cannabis receptors so they're more potent than natural cannabis. This means it's easier to use too much and experience unpleasant and harmful effects.

The myths

- All synthetic cannabinoids are the same
- It will give the user the same effect as cannabis
- Synthetic cannabinoids are safe to use
- They are legal to use

These are all untrue, not only do synthetic cannabinoids vary in strengths and ingredients from batch to batch, there are also many different types of synthetic cannabinoids. Because of this it's never safe to use, even if you have used previously and been OK. All synthetic cannabinoids are illegal. Keep reading to find out more.

How are synthetic cannabinoids taken?

Synthetic cannabinoids are normally used in a similar way to cannabis:

- They can be mixed with tobacco, rolled up into a 'spliff' or 'joint', and then smoke.

- They can be smoked without tobacco using a pipe or bong.
- Some people smoke it using e-cigarettes – by using specialised cannabis 'vapers' or by turning their cannabis into a liquid which can be used with a normal e-cigarette. There is also no evidence on the safety of home-made cannabis e-liquids.
- Others drink or eat it mixed in cookies, cakes or cups of tea. The effects can be more difficult to predict or to control when taking it this way. It takes cannabis longer to get in to your body by this route.

What does it look like?

In their pure form, synthetic cannabinoids are either solids or oils. They are then added to dried herbs, vegetable matter or plant cuttings to make a smoking mixture (so that it looks more like real herbal cannabis).

The smoking mixtures are packaged in small, often colourful sachets with labels describing the contents as incense or herbal smoking mixture and usually stating 'not for human consumption'.

There are many different names given to herbal smoking mixtures and there are many different brand names for smoking mixtures, but it is not uncommon for different brands to contain the same synthetic cannabinoids.



What are the effects?

Synthetic cannabinoids act like THC, the active substance in natural cannabis, but are often more potent, so it's easier to use too much and experience unpleasant and harmful effects.

Typical effects include:

- Feelings of being happy, euphoric with some people getting the giggles
- People can feel more relaxed
- Feeling hunger pangs
- Some people become very talkative, others get drowsy
- Mood and perception can change and concentration and co-ordination may become difficult
- Synthetic cannabinoids, possibly because of their potency, are more likely to be associated with hallucinations than natural cannabis
- Some will have quite bad reactions, such as paranoia, panic attacks
- Some people experience memory problems such as forgetfulness
- Some people experience aggression as a result of synthetic cannabinoid use
- Pain relief