

ARE NPS SAFE?

NO – just because a substance is sold as legal, it doesn't mean it is legal and it doesn't mean it is safe. It may actually contain illegal substances. Also, any drug which is intended for human use must be rigorously tested and regulated under the Medicines Act. NPS have not undergone such testing. This means that by consuming them you are taking a real risk with your health. NPS are marketed as not being intended for human consumption and can therefore be sold unregulated. It would be illegal to sell, supply or advertise them as suitable for human consumption.

MIXING DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Mixing substances can increase the risk of harm and even create new substances. For example mixing cocaine and alcohol creates a substance called cocaethylene which could put additional strain on your heart and liver. The same principles apply when taking legal highs/ research chemicals with bevvvy or mixing stimulants (speed, cocaine, MDMA) with depressants (alcohol, benzos). This can put much more strain on your body, so be careful and see how you get on with small doses if you are determined to mix. Not mixing substances can be a cheaper, safer and more memorable night!

SPIKING

Sometimes drinks can be spiked with other substances such as rohypnol or sedatives (commonly referred to as date rape drugs). Young people should be made aware of this risk and always keep their drink in sight to safeguard against spiking. If people feel that their drink has been spiked they must tell someone they trust. If a friend collapses and they think their drink may have been spiked they should phone for an ambulance and stay with them until help arrives.

More information can be found at:

www.youngscotextra.org/articles/mixing-drugs-and-alcohol

As well as the websites on the front page.

If you or someone you know wish to talk to someone for advice or information call the **Know the Score Helpline** on **0800 587 5879** (Lines are open from 8am to 11pm, 7 days a week).

WHAT CAN PARENTS AND CARERS DO??

It is important that young people are aware that these products – despite being labelled as legal – are not safe. Parents and carers have a vital role in this. They should make sure that their own knowledge about NPS is accurate and as up-to-date as possible so that they can discuss them with their child and make their child aware of the possible risks.

Some tips to help with this are:

1. **Listen carefully to your child. Find the time and space to listen and talk with them – find out what they know and what, if any, worries they may have.**
2. **Young people often think that they know more than they do. So do some adults! If you don't know, say so! And then suggest that you find out together!**
3. **Reassure your child that it's OK not to take drugs – often young people feel that they have to try drugs and alcohol to be part of the crowd or be seen to fit in.**
4. **Try to establish a clear family position on drug and alcohol use. Explain the dangers and the reasons you have for not wanting them to experiment. Ask their views on news stories or TV story lines involving drugs or alcohol.**
5. **Praising your child will help to boost their self esteem and will encourage them to continue making good choices with their health. Always have positive expectations – always expect the best and not the worst.**
6. **Make sure you have clear rules about right and wrong behaviour**
7. **Repeat the messages whenever you can – listen carefully and find the time and space to talk with your child!**
8. **There is no set age for beginning to talk about drugs and alcohol but there are cases of very young children being offered these substances. Primary school aged children should know about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and this information can be built on as they grow older.**



NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES & ALCOHOL

BRIEFING SHEET

For Further Information:

- knowthescore.info
- www.crew2000.org.uk
- choicesforlifeonline.org
- www.drinksarter.org
- www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk
- www.getthelowdown.co.uk

WHAT IS A NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE?

Previously known as 'Legal Highs', **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)** are drugs that are designed to produce similar effects to illegal drugs but are structurally different enough to avoid being controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

There has been little research in to the effects of NPS but we know the health risks are similar to drugs like cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamine and cannabis.

The term 'Legal High' can be misleading because they have actually been found to contain substances that are in fact illegal. The substances are generally bought from 'head-shops' or purchased from internet sites. They are usually marketed as bath salts, incense, room odourisers or plant food.

NPSs are sold under a variety of names and often the ingredients will not be listed on the packaging. It is very hard to know what you are taking. These substances are often referred to as research chemicals, and can often contain illegal substances.

WHAT IS A HEAD SHOP?

A **Head Shop** is a retail outlet that sells drug paraphernalia and equipment such as pipes and bongs for smoking cannabis, art, magazines and clothes. They may also sell NPS or research chemicals. Owners of head shops claim that they are selling these products for use as plant food or bath salts but the fact they can be purchased alongside drug taking equipment is of concern.

The internet is an easy and popular route for the purchasing of NPS. Users can also obtain information online on how to use these substances and what the likely effects might be.

WHAT ARE THE LIKELY EFFECTS ON THE BODY?



Risks include reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, psychosis, hallucinations and seizures. They have been linked to hospital admissions and deaths.

Because these drugs are so new, and because they are changing all the time, very little is known about them. We have some information about the possible short term effects that users report. Some of the negative effects include:

- **Nose bleeds**
- **Heart palpitations**
- **Changes in behaviour or personality**
- **Confusion**
- **Panic**
- **Vomiting**
- **Sleeplessness**
- **Anxiety**
- **Paranoia**

Because of the unregulated nature of these substances, a drug that is consumed this week without adverse effect may, under the same name, have a different chemical make up the next week. Nobody can assume that any new compound is in any way 'safe' to use recreationally. There is no way of predicting a) what the substance is or b) what the likely effects on the body might be.

ALCOHOL

Young people might be naturally curious about alcohol, or they might experience peer pressure to start drinking before they're ready. Life is all about making choices and it's important to learn about the risks, as well as the benefits, associated with drinking alcohol. If people choose to drink, here are some facts they should know:

- **Each unit of alcohol takes approximately one hour for the liver to process.**
- **Drinking outside, or being outside when drunk increases the chances of having an accident or falling asleep outdoors and freezing to death (hypothermia).**
- **Large amounts taken quickly can cause alcohol poisoning (painful and dangerous). Very drunk people fall asleep and can choke on their own vomit.**
- **Drink slowly and take soft drinks between alcoholic drinks to pace yourself. Drink a pint of water before bed and during the night to keep yourself hydrated**
- **It is currently an offence to sell or buy alcohol for someone under 18. Police can confiscate alcohol from under 18's drinking in public.**

Further information and advice for parents/carers and young people about keeping safe if drinking alcohol can be found at:

www.drinksmarter.org

www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

www.getthelowdown.co.uk