

# 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 and through adult stores and tobacconists.

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

Many new psychoactive substances are illegal because of the potential risk of harm they pose.

## WHAT HARM CAN THEY CAUSE?

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

## WHAT DO WE KNOW?

These emerging or new synthetic drugs are so new that they have rarely or never been tested. There has been an increasing number of severe poisonings 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 then you are safe
- you don't know how they might react to other substances you have taken including alcohol or other drugs
- you don't know that the drug will be the strength or same drug you had last time.

## 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 behaviour
- Amnesia.

### Physical health

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

### Mental health

- Anxiety
- Acute psychosis
- Paranoia.

## 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 doses 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.

## THE LAW

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

## DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SYNTHETICS

Under the Road Transport Act 2013 police have the power to require drivers suspected of being under the influence of drugs to submit to blood, saliva or urine tests at a hospital. If you are convicted of driving under the influence of a drug, you could lose your licence, get a fine or go to prison, as well as the possession of many such substances.

## SYNTHETIC RELATED EMERGENCY

If you or someone you know consumes a synthetic or psychoactive drug and gets into trouble, you should immediately call Triple Zero "000".

# SELF-HELP ASSOCIATIONS

**Narcotics Anonymous Australia**, a non profit fellowship or society of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean via a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. Visit [www.na.org.au](http://www.na.org.au)

**Smart Recovery** is a voluntary self-help group that assists people in recovering from alcohol, drug use and other addictive behaviours. Visit [www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au)

## INFORMATION AND ADVICE

For free and confidential advice about alcohol and other drugs 24 hours, 7 days a week, call the **National Alcohol and Other Drug hotline: 1800 250 015**.

It will automatically direct you to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service in the state or territory you are calling from.

**Your room** provides drug and alcohol information and advice, campaigns and resources. Visit [www.yourroom.com.au](http://www.yourroom.com.au)

**Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council** provides links to Aboriginal community controlled health services across NSW. Visit [www.ahmrc.org.au](http://www.ahmrc.org.au) for information about AHMRC members including a regional map, information and links to members websites.

**Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC)** provides services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Contact DAMEC on (02) 8113 1301 or for counselling and support services for CALD communities call (02) 8706 0150.

**Drug Info** provides facts and resources on alcohol and other drugs and the prevention of related harm. Visit [www.druginfo.adf.org.au](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au)

**State Library of New South Wales Drug Info** provides up to date information on alcohol and other drugs in public libraries throughout NSW. Visit [www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au)

**eheadspace** provides mental health and wellbeing support, information and services for young people (12-25 years) and their family and friends. Visit [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)

**Family Drug Support** provides 24-7 telephone support to families in crisis due to drug and alcohol issues. Call the Helpline on 1300 368 186 or visit [www.fds.org.au](http://www.fds.org.au)

**Kids Helpline** is a free, 24 hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Counselling is offered via the Kids Helpline website [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au) or email, or call 1800 55 1800.

**Nepean Youth Drug and Alcohol Service (NYDAS)** works within a holistic model of care to address a range of issues for young people (12 -20 years of age) related to their alcohol and other drug use. Call (02) 4734 2129 or (02) 4734 1333.

**NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)** is a peak drug user organisation in NSW providing harm reduction information and blood borne virus prevention peer education. Visit [www.nuaa.org.au](http://www.nuaa.org.au)

**Poisons Information Centre** is a 24/7 call centre service available across Australia. Call 13 11 26

**ReachOut** is an Australian online youth mental health service with a mobile-friendly site and forums where you can access help, information and support. Visit [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

**Sexual Health Info Link** provides free and confidential sexual health support and information. Visit [www.shil.nsw.gov.au](http://www.shil.nsw.gov.au)

**TAFE NSW** provides help with education, career development or personal matters. Students can contact a local TAFE/university counsellor. Visit [www.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.tafensw.edu.au)

**Youth Action** is the peak organisation for young people in NSW. Visit [www.youthaction.org.au](http://www.youthaction.org.au) and use the search option to access a directory of NSW youth services.

**Youth Solutions** provides services for young people 12 to 25 years of age and the community including prevention and health promotion, drug and alcohol education, community programs and information and referral. Visit [www.youthsolutions.com.au](http://www.youthsolutions.com.au) or call (02) 4628 2319 [provides services to young people in Macarthur & Wingecarribee].

**NSW Health aims to reduce drug-related harm for individuals and the community by providing the facts, including the possible health, social and economic consequences of using alcohol and other drugs.**

A range of drug and alcohol fact sheets is available for download at: [www.yourroom.com.au](http://www.yourroom.com.au)

