



Facts About New psychoactive substances

What are NPS?

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are a range of man-made drugs that copy the look and effect of well-known illicit drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). There are many types of NPS including:

- ⦿ synthetic cannabinoids e.g. Kronik, Northern Lights, Spice
- ⦿ phenethylamines e.g. 2C series, D series, Bromo- Dragonfly
- ⦿ synthetic cathinones e.g. mephedrone, methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), Ivory Wave
- ⦿ tryptamines e.g. DMT, AMT
- ⦿ other NPS e.g. novel benzodiazepines, novel opioids, plant-based NPS.

The laws about NPS are complex and differ between the states and territories.

What do they look like?

NPS come in many forms including:

- ⦿ liquid
- ⦿ tablet
- ⦿ powder
- ⦿ crystals
- ⦿ capsules
- ⦿ blotters (paper).

It can be hard for users to tell NPS apart from the original drugs:

- ⦿ synthetic cannabinoids such as Kronik and Northern Lights often have colourful legal-looking packaging
- ⦿ phenethylamines such as Bromo-Dragonfly can be distributed on blotters, and are often mistaken for LSD. They can also appear as a pink or white powder in a plastic bag.
- ⦿ synthetic cathinones can be powdery or crystal-like, and be sold in packaging that identifies them as bath salts
- ⦿ tryptamines can appear as yellow crystal clusters; in a yellow, pink, or white pill form; or as a brown organic compound, similar to granulated coffee
- ⦿ other NPS such as novel benzodiazepine and opioids can appear as regular medicine, while plant-based NPS can appear as a leafy substance or packed inside clear, dissolvable capsules.

How do they work?

Each class (type) of NPS works differently:

- ⦿ synthetic cannabinoids, phenethylamines and tryptamines are psychoactive in nature and can affect a person's sense of awareness or the way they think
- ⦿ synthetic cathinones are stimulants and can cause a feeling of euphoria (a strong sense of happiness)
- ⦿ other NPS have varying effects.

How do people use them?

NPS are swallowed, smoked, injected or snorted. Each type of NPS is used differently:

- ⦿ synthetic cannabinoids are usually smoked, like regular cannabis
- ⦿ phenethylamines, synthetic cathinones and tryptamines are generally swallowed, although crystalline substances can also be snorted, smoked or injected
- ⦿ other NPS are generally swallowed.

What are the short term harms from NPS?

- ⦿ synthetic cannabinoids
 - cardiovascular (heart) problems
 - seizures (fits)
 - nausea (feeling sick in the stomach)
 - agitation
- ⦿ phenethylamine
 - cardiovascular problems
 - seizures
 - agitation
 - hyperthermia (high body temperature)
 - death
- ⦿ synthetic cathinones
 - anxiety (worry)
 - agitation
 - chest pain
 - paraesthesia (pins and needles)
 - heart palpitations (irregular heartbeat)



- ⊙ tryptamines
 - high levels of mental harm
 - anxiety
 - hysteria
- ⊙ other NPS
 - tremors (shaking)
 - vomiting
 - hyperthermia
 - rhabdomyolysis (breakdown of muscle tissue that poisons the bloodstream)
 - urine retention.

What are the long term harms of using NPS?

- ⊙ synthetic cannabinoids
 - acute kidney damage
 - stroke
 - tachycardia (faster than normal heart rate)
 - psychosis/aggressive or violent behaviour
- ⊙ phenethylamine
 - metabolic acidosis (internal acidity affecting the human body)
 - organ failure
- ⊙ synthetic cathinones
 - dependence (addiction)
 - hypertension (high blood pressure)
- ⊙ tryptamines
 - long term effects may be similar to other psychotic drugs
- ⊙ other NPS
 - kidney failure
 - organ damage.

Treatment

Medical practitioners are recommended to provide evidence-based treatment of the traditional drug that the new drug is similar to, for example, counselling and withdrawal management.

Alcohol and Drug Telephone Support Services

If you want help or are worried about someone's NPS use call the **Alcohol and Drug Telephone Support Service** in your state or see the [Knowledge Centre's listing of programs](#)

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| ACT Ph: (02) 6207 9977 | SA Ph: 1300 131 340 |
| NSW Ph: (02) 9361 8000 (metro) Ph: 1800 422 599 (rural) | Tas Ph: 1800 811 994 |
| NT Ph: 1800 131 350 | Vic Ph: 1800 888 236 |
| Qld Ph: 1800 177 833 | WA Ph: (08) 9442 5000 Ph: 1800 198 024 (rural) |

References

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