



# 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. Kronic, 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 Kronic 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, phenylamines 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.

## 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](#)

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

## References

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