A GUIDE TO NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES AKA LEGAL HIGHS

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE
New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) aka ‘legal highs’ are a group of drugs that contain chemical substances that produce similar effects to illegal drugs such as cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy. They are sold as powders, pills, liquids, capsules or reefer and cost approximately £10 each or £20 for three and can be bought from shops or online. They are yet to be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and at the moment there isn’t enough information available about their effects.

New legislation has now been proposed and is likely to come into force in 2016 to make them illegal.

The use of NPS effects people differently and ingredients can vary from batch to batch. Ultimately taking NPS can result in death.

Some of the substances used in them aren’t legal so just because they are technically legal at the moment doesn’t mean they are safe.

GMP is committed to tackling the issue of legal highs and will take action on those found in possession of them. They can confiscate NPS from anyone if they are within an area designated under a Public Space Protection Order.

LAUGHING GAS/NITROUS OXIDE

Nitrous oxide has a legitimate use but when inhaled it can make people feel happy and relaxed, which is why it is nicknamed ‘laughing gas’.

Effects:

- Feelings of euphoria, relaxation and calmness.
- Dizziness, difficulty in thinking straight and fits of giggles/laughter.
- Sound distortions or even hallucinations.
- In some people, a headache can be an unwanted immediate effect.

Other risks include:

- Unconsciousness or death from lack of oxygen.

This occurs when the available oxygen for breathing is effectively pushed out by the nitrous oxide.

The risk is greater if the gas is consumed in an enclosed space or if a plastic bag is used that covers both nose and mouth.
GENERAL EFFECTS OF NPS

As the ingredients vary the effects alter each time they’re taken and you could accidentally overdose.

In general the risks are:

- Reduced inhibitions
- Drowsiness
- Excited or paranoid states
- Psychosis
- Hallucinations
- Coma and seizures

Stimulant legal highs can make you:

- Overconfident and disinhibited
- They induce feelings of anxiety, panic, confusion, paranoia and can even cause psychosis
- Strain on your heart and nervous system
- Poor immune system
- Feeling low

‘Downers’ or sedatives such as ‘Spice’ or cannabinoids can make you:

- Feel lethargic, or forgetful
- You feel physically unsteady and at risk of accidents such as, unconsciousness, coma and death, particularly when mixed with alcohol and/or with other ‘downer’ drugs
- Some people feel very anxious soon after they stop taking ‘downers’
- Heavy drug users can experience severe withdrawal syndrome which is particularly dangerous and you may need medical treatment
Psychedelics or hallucinogens such as ‘Mind Benders’ or ‘Space Cadets’ can make you:

- Hallucinate, have hallucinatory reactions ('bad trips'), act erratically, sometimes without regard to their safety
- Some psychedelic drugs create strong dissociative effects, which make you feel like your mind and body are separated - this can interfere with your judgement
- Loss of judgement could put you at risk of acting carelessly, dangerously, or hurting yourself, particularly in an unsafe environment

**STAYING SAFE WHEN TAKING LEGAL HIGHS**

If someone you know is going to take an NPS make sure they aren’t alone in case they become ill or decide to do something dangerous.

Their effect can last up to 12 hours or more and the come down can last days.

Take them somewhere you feel safe and can relax.

Look after each other, the way you would each like to be looked after.

If they do fall ill use your first aid skills including the recovery position - lay them on their side to stop them from feeling sick.

Call 999 for an ambulance and explain what has happened. Keep the packet as it may help medical staff identify what drug has been taken.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT**

TALK TO FRANK

www.talktofrank.com - read other people’s own stories online who have taken them.

Always dial 999 in an emergency and dial 101 in a non-emergency.

You can also stay involved in the discussion on legal highs use #legalhighs