

LEGAL HIGHS

What is a 'legal high'?

- Used like an illegal substance such as cocaine or cannabis but is not covered by current drug misuse laws.
- Marketed under dozens of names – Legal E, Legal Cocaine, Fast Lane and Silver Bullet.
- Might be referred to as legal however it does not mean that it is safe or approved for use; simply that it has not been declared illegal.
- The use of the term 'legal drug' does not mean that a substance is a prescribed drug with a medical use. Many legal highs are relatively new and occupy a grey area within the law, they are often untested. No one can really be sure if they are safe.
- In many cases 'legal highs' are structurally different so they mimic a Class A drug but avoid being classed as an illegal substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act.
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Concerns about 'Legal Highs'

- Just because a drug is legal to possess, it doesn't mean it's safe.
- Very little research in the short, medium and long term risks of the various 'legal highs' however it is becoming increasingly clear that they are far from harmless and can have similar health risks to drugs like cocaine, ecstasy and speed.
- Risks of 'legal highs' can include reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, coma, seizures and death.
- These risks are increased if used with alcohol or other drugs.
- It is likely that drugs sold as a 'legal high' may actually contain one or more substances that actually are illegal to possess.

Where does the law stand?

In December last year some of the more common 'legal highs' were banned. These are:

- GBL and other chemical derived by 1,4- Butanediol (1,4-BD) (to be criminalised when intended for human consumption only)
- BZP and its related compounds (mCPP, TFMPP etc)
- Synthetic cannabiniods (such as those found in Spice)

These substances and other compounds come under the legislation of a Class C substance, the same class as Ketamine and tranquillisers. However cannabiniod drugs such as spice now fall under a higher class, Class B legislation, in line with cannabis and amphetamines.

Mephedrone and related cathinones became Class B substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 on the 16th of April 2010.

Being caught in possession of a Class B substance carries a penalty of up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both. Production and/or dealing in a Class B substance carries a penalty of up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

A Class C substance for possession is up to 2 years in prison, or a fine, or both. And with production or dealing for class C substances, it's up to 14 years in prison, or a fine, or both.

What else do I need to know?

- You never know what you taking in any drug, so the effects can be very unpredictable.
- “Legal Highs” can contain a range of potentially dangerous chemicals, and their chemical make-up changes all the time. This means you can never be 100% certain of what you have bought, and what the effects might be.
- Suppliers may use descriptions such as bath salts, plant food, research chemicals, fertiliser and cleaning fluid, or statements such as “not for human consumption” in order to try to get around the law.
- Risk is increased if the drug is combined with alcohol.