

Synthetic Cannabinoids

Legal cannabis, legal pot, legal weed, herbal highs. Usually referred by a product brand name such as K2, Spice, Kronic etc...

What does it do?

Synthetic cannabis users report experiences similar to those produced by natural marijuana -- elevated mood, relaxation, and altered perception. Often, the effects can be stronger than those of natural marijuana due to the synthesized chemicals. Some users report psychotic effects like extreme anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations. The chemicals synthesized for the production of synthetic cannabis can be more potent than natural THC found in marijuana, and may have more dangerous side effects.



What is it?

Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that mimic the effect of THC – one of the ingredients in cannabis. THC is the part of cannabis that gets you 'high'. These chemicals are added to a mixture of dried plant matter and sold under brand names such as "Kronic", "Spice", and "K2". Such products were developed to be a legal alternative to cannabis, however many synthetic cannabinoids substances are now illegal in New Zealand.



Synthetic cannabis and your mental health

There is increasing concern about serious acute and long-term toxicities and long-lasting psychosis in some consumers. People with pre-existing mental health conditions appear to be particularly negatively affected by synthetic cannabinoids. (NZ Drug Foundation, May 2014)



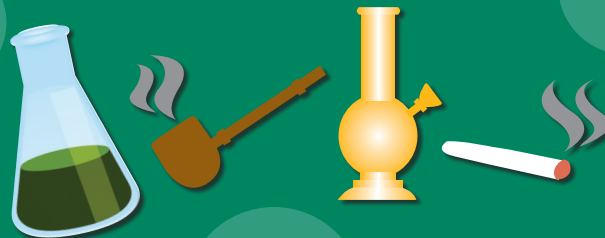
What happens if I stop using?

The first few days may be very intense and some users have reported strong symptoms and cravings for a few weeks. Most people can get through mild withdrawal by knowing what to expect and taking care of themselves by way of rest, mild exercise and keeping hydrated.



There is no "safe way" to use synthetic cannabis, however, if you are choosing to use, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

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Synthetic Cannabis Withdrawals – Here are some of the things you may experience

Physical Health

- Chest pains
- Heart palpitations
- Tremors
- Seizures
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Difficulty breathing
- Constipation
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Pins and needles
- Panic attacks
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling emotional
- Sleeping problems
- Confusion
- Fear of dying
- Craving
- Irritability and aggression

Mental health

- Low mood
- Suicidal feelings
- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- Anxiety

Getting help

If there is an emergency call 111 immediately.
These helplines can provide support to those looking for help:

- Alcohol and Drug Helpline (10am - 10pm)
0800 787 797
- Healthline 0800 611 116
- Lifeline (24/7) 0800 543 354

You can also visit your GP for help, or if you're experiencing withdrawal and can no longer cope with the symptoms go to the Emergency Room of your nearest hospital.



Staying safe

If you are going to use synthetic cannabis, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:

- Going low, going slow. Just use a bit at a time and wait to see what it feels like.
- Stick with brands you know.
- Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol. Things can get out of control quickly.
- Not driving or doing anything that requires coordination after you've used.
- Only using with people you trust. It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.
- Having synthetic cannabis free days. Avoid using if you have school, uni or work the next day.
- Calling an ambulance (111) if things get bad.



is a team of health care professionals working to support young people aged up to 18 who have concerns about their own, or someone else's alcohol and other drug use.

Call them direct on 07 557 5052
or 0800 BAYSORT, 0800 229 7678
or email sorted@bopdnh.govt.nz