



SESSION 7 – DRUGS SESSION PLAN

REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS SESSION

Option 1 **Guest Drug worker**

Option 2 **Legal high quiz**

Option 3 **Common drug fact sheets**

Option 4 **Vape quiz**

Just Say No Exercise

Home challenge

AIM OF SESSION

Welcome and feedback. Ask parents how they got on with setting limits, consequences and if they used consequence chores. Give time to go over the rules of logical consequences if needed and use open discussion to reflect on the process. If a drug worker is attending the session they are to join the group after the feedback section is completed.

For this session there are 4 delivery Options. If there's time 2 options can be implemented.

Note Break to be given approximately one hour after the session has started.

OPTION 1

Guest Drug worker. A drug worker from local children's/young people's drug service is invited to attend and present their knowledge of local drugs with the group. The benefit of having a local drug worker is they have up-to-date expertise on the subject (as in the drug culture; names, grading, costs and trends). Also, it is a good opportunity for parents to meet, face to face a member of the local drug service. Our experience has shown that following this session parents with concerns feel more comfortable to approach the local service to discuss their teenager's problems.

OPTION 2

Legal high quiz. Put the parents in pairs or in small groups. Hand out the legal high quiz sheets. Give a short time limit then review answers and open discussion on legal highs. Refer to legal high fact sheet hand out.

OPTION 3

Common drug fact sheets. On flip chart put up the list of the most common drugs used by young people. Open discussion on each of the drugs. Group facilitator to clarify the relevant information from the common drug fact sheets. For group facilitators outside the UK, the information will need to be reviewed to make it relatable to your country.

OPTION 4

Vape quiz. Put the parents in pairs or in small groups. Hand out the Vape quiz sheets. Give a short time limit then review answers and open discussion on Vaping. Refer to Vaping fact sheet hand out.



JUST SAY NO EXERCISE

This is a fun way of helping the group think about peer pressure and explore ways in which they can support their young person to say no.

Put the parents into pairs and give one of the pairs a packet of Rolo's. The parent with the Rolo's must try and get the other parent to eat a Rolo. The parent without the Rolo is to try and not eat a Rolo. Give the pairs a time limit. After the time limit, ask the parents how hard it was to resist the Rolos when the other person was being persistent in trying to persuade you to take and eat a Rolo.

This to lead to a group discussion on how difficult it was to "Just Say No".

Expand the discussion to ask parents to imagine if they were 13 or 14 again and it was a 'cool' 16-year-old who you admired who was offering you something. Or maybe it is a group of your peers doing the offering.

How hard would it be to "Just Say No?" This exercise is not to undermine the importance of the "Just Say No" message, but for parents to begin to understand how hard that might be for a young person to do and maintain. It will hopefully also help to set some realistic expectations of your young person regarding these kinds of situations, and perhaps a little more understanding if they get it wrong. This exercise reinforces how important the parents' relationship and communication is with their young person when these kinds of difficulties present themselves

Note - It is often helpful to give out leaflets on drugs in this session. Group facilitators to contact the local drug and alcohol service of their area to advise them on the most up-to-date leaflets available and order these for the group.

HOME CHALLENGE

END OF SESSION



OPTION 2

LEGAL HIGHS QUIZ – QUESTIONS

A What are the most common drugs taken by young people

- a. LSD
- b. Cannabis
- c. Cocaine
- d. Heroin and crack
- e. Ecstasy
- f. Alcohol
- g. Vaping

B Legal highs are legal

- a. True
- b. False

C How are legal highs used?

- a. Orally
- b. Smoked
- c. Inhaled
- d. Added to drinks
- e. Injected
- f. All of the above

D Legal highs are safe

- a. True
- b. False

E Legal highs aren't as strong as illegal drugs

- a. True
- b. False

F Can you be addicted to legal highs

- a. Yes
- b. No

G Legal highs are cheaper than illegal drugs

- a. True
- b. False

H Is laughing gas a legal high

- a. Yes
- b. No



LEGAL HIGHS QUIZ – THE ANSWERS

A What are the most common drugs taken by young people

- f. **Alcohol.** By far the most commonly abused substance among teens and young adults. Cannabis remains the most common substance that young people seek medical treatment for. Smoking tobacco has declined over the years, however vaping among secondary-school children is rising.

B Legal highs are legal

- c. **FALSE.** A legal high is getting recreational effects from “new psychoactive substances” (NPS). In general, they’re substances that closely mimic the effects of illegal drugs, such as ecstasy or cocaine. But because their chemical compositions are slightly different, this exploits loopholes in legislation, which in effect, technically makes them legal. Legal highs are technically considered legal to sell if it’s under a misleading pretext, e.g., manufacturers sell legal highs in disguised packaging that warns “not for human consumption”. Based on its common name of “legal high,” there is a misconception that there are no legal repercussions from taking these substances. In the UK, legal highs have in fact been made illegal since 2016. The production, distribution, sale and supply of legal highs is now an offence that is punishable by up to seven years in prison, after the Psychoactive Substances Act was brought into effect on 26 May 2016. Possession of a psychoactive substance is not an offence, except in a “custodial institution”, such as prison or young offender centres. However, if a person had a small amount of legal high drugs in their possession but are caught giving some to a friend/friend, they can be prosecuted for distributing these drugs. This is true even if no money is exchange. Drug-driving, including after using a legal high, is illegal. Countries across the world have different regulations and legal highs can be bought over the internet, making it harder to control.

C How are legal highs used?

- f. **They can be taken orally, smoked, inhaled, added to drinks or injected (very rare).** Because they cannot be labelled as being for human consumption, they are often marketed as plant food, bath salts or incense. They produce similar effects to illegal drugs like cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy.

D Legal highs are safe

- b. **FALSE.** This is one of the biggest misconceptions about legal highs. Just because they are technically legal, doesn’t mean they’re safe. The problem is that many of these substances contain all sorts of chemicals which have not always been tested for human consumption. If they are combined with other substances such as alcohol, then this increases the risks. Physical risks include hypertension, heart disease, nosebleeds, weight loss, tremors and diabetes. There are no long-term studies on these drugs, so no-one really knows what the long-term health risks are. Psychological risks include anxiety, panic attacks, memory loss and paranoia.

**E Legal highs aren't as strong as illegal drugs**

- b. **FALSE.** In fact, they're potentially more potent than illegal drugs, because of the unknown contents of the legal high.

F Can you be addicted to legal highs

- a. **Yes.** Many of these substances behave in the same way as synthetic drugs and can lead to dependency over a period of time.

G Legal highs are cheaper than illegal drugs

- a. **TRUE.** The pricing of drugs works just like any other business. It's all to do with supply and demand. Supplying illegal drugs can be difficult and involves high risk. All this increases the price up. But with legal highs the process is much simpler. This means that the supply is simpler, and the cost is lower.

H Is laughing gas a legal high

- a. **Yes.** Nitrous oxide is known commonly as laughing gas, it is a colourless gas that is most commonly found in pressurised metal canisters. These metal canisters are often seen lying around in streets particularly outside bars and nightclubs. It is becoming increasingly popular with young people and is readily available to buy online. When it is inhaled, usually through a balloon, it can make people feel happy, relaxed, dizzy and lead to hallucinations. Taking several doses can prolong the dream-like effects. It is not a hallucinogen but there is often a distortion of audio and visual perceptions. Laughing gas is often categorised as a 'legal high' but is considerably less risky than others, such as synthetic cannabis and stimulant mixtures. However, if someone takes too much nitrous oxide, they risk falling unconscious and/or suffocating from the lack of oxygen. In the UK it is illegal to sell nitrous oxide to anyone under the age of 18. It is illegal to supply for human consumption (penalty is 7 years in prison or unlimited fine). It is illegal to possess nitrous oxide.



OPTION 3

DRUG FACT SHEETS – COMMON DRUGS USED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

KETAMINE

What is it? Ketamine, a powerful horse tranquiliser and anaesthetic, is a licensed drug and can be prescribed medically. The drug came into the spotlight following the death of 'Friends' actor Matthew Perry aged 54 and has become quite fashionable. Although highly dangerous, it is often seen as a sociable way to get high with users buying it in powder form and snorting it.

Once ketamine was known as a party drug, associated with the club scene. But there's evidence to suggest that has changed. What makes ketamine especially dangerous is that lots of people, particularly young people, wrongly see it as a lower-risk drug.

Ketamine is a dissociative anaesthetic, meaning users will feel detached from themselves and their immediate surroundings. The drug also has painkilling, stimulant and psychedelic effects

Class of drug It was made a class B drug in the UK in 2014 and is illegal to buy or sell. Possessing the drug can lead to a maximum five-year prison sentence and supplying the drug up to 14 years in prison.

What does it cost It costs £15 to £40 for a gram and often young people will share it.

What is it known as? ketamine – also known as Vitamin K, super K, special K, K, green, donkey dust, k2, super c, lady k, ket, kit kat, ketaset, ketajet, jet, super acid, purple, mauve, super acid, special la coke, cat tranquillizers, cat valiums, special.

What does it look like? The drug comes in a variety of forms. Pharmaceutical ketamine is usually a liquid. On the street it is more common to see tablets or a white crystalline powder. Powdered ketamine is often snorted, though it may be swallowed- although sometimes it can come as tablets. If sniffed the effects of ketamine generally come on quickly and can last from about 20 minutes to a couple of hours.

Can it harm you? ketamine can cause.

- Reduce sensations in the body, giving you a floating or detached feeling as if the mind and body have been separated, with some people feeling incapable of moving. This has been linked to having a near-death experience and is sometimes called 'entering the k-hole'.
- Change how you see and hear things and can cause hallucinations. You can 'trip' for between half an hour to several hours, and after-effects may be felt for some hours afterwards.
- Confusion, agitation, panic attacks, and impairment in short- and long-term memory. Frequent use is sometimes associated with the development of depression.
- Cause very serious bladder problems in regular users. They can have problems peeing and when they do it can be very painful. Sometimes the damage is so bad that the bladder has to be removed by surgery. The urinary tract, from the kidneys down to the bladder, can also be badly affected.



CANNABIS

What is it? Cannabis is the most commonly used drug in England and Wales.

Class of drug Cannabis is classified as a Class B drug. In 2004, the United Kingdom made cannabis a Class C drug with less severe penalties, but it was moved back to Class B in 2009. Medical use of cannabis, when prescribed by a registered specialist doctor, was legalised in November 2018.

What does it cost Average Cost of Weed (per 1/8 oz) starts from £19.

What is it known as? Bhang, black, blast, blow, blunts, Bob Hope, bush, dope, bud, draw, Ganja, grass, hash, hashish, hemp, herb, marijuana, Mary jane, pot, puff, Northern Lights, resin, sensi, sensemilla, skunk, smoke, spliff, wacky backy, weed, zero.

What does it look like? Cannabis comes in different forms:

- Herbal/grass/weed/marijuana – This is the most common way to find cannabis. It is composed of the dried leaves which resembles compressed dried herbs.
- Skunk – Skunk is a stronger form of herbal cannabis that consists just of the buds.
- Hash or cannabis resin – A black or brown lump. Not seen in the UK very much anymore.
- Cannabis oil – Rarely seen, cannabis oil is a sticky, thick yellowy/brown liquid.
- Shatter – Highly concentrated form made by stripping the THC out of the cannabis plant with Butane gas, the result is a glass-like extract. It is broken up to be smoked and can be used in e-liquids in vape pens.

Can it harm you? People who smoke cannabis experience long and short-term effects. Short-term effects include relaxation, altered perceptions and euphoria. Others may experience anxiety, paranoia and memory impairment, at higher doses.

Risks involved with cannabis use include:

- Regular cannabis use can lead to dependence, with up to 10% of cannabis users developing a cannabis use disorder (CUD).
- Long-term risks include increased susceptibility to mental health issues, as well as the potential for psychotic episodes.



COCAINE

What is it? Cocaine is a white powder derived from the leaves of the coca shrub. Powdered cocaine remains one of the most commonly abused drugs in the UK

Class of drug Cocaine and crack are controlled as Class A drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. It is illegal to be in possession of either crack or cocaine or supply them to other people. Maximum penalties for possession are 7 years imprisonment plus a fine and for supply and production the maximum penalty is life imprisonment plus a fine

What does it cost? The price of cocaine normally starts from £46 per gram. Crack is commonly sold by the rock, from £16 buying you 0.25g.

What is it known as? Coca paste – basuco, Powder cocaine – C, Charlie, coke, blow, dust, Gianluca, gold dust, Percy, lady, snow, toot, white, crack – base, freebase, gravel, rock, stones, wash.

What does it look like? Cocaine is a highly addictive stimulant that can come in “powder” and “crack” cocaine forms. Both forms are made from the dried leaves of cocoa plants, native to South America. Powder cocaine is usually snorted, whereas crack cocaine is a solidified substance that is smoked and inhaled. Coca paste, also known basuco, is a smokable form of cocaine made from the plant’s leaves. Its use is rare outside the producing countries. Cocaine powder is often cut up into short lines and then sniffed up the nose through a rolled-up piece of paper or straw. Sometimes small amounts are sniffed directly. Crack cocaine is smoked through a pipe which can be as rudimentary as an empty drink can.

Can it harm you? Powder cocaine can cause.

Powdered cocaine is a stimulant that rapidly increases energy in the user. Under the effects of cocaine, people usually report higher confidence and alertness, with a sudden surge in the neurochemical dopamine. These effects are short-lived, with the high lasting around an hour. People report “crashing” the following day, flooded with feelings of depression, fatigue and anxiety. Powder cocaine is seen as less dangerous than crack form yet still carries life-threatening health risks.

These can include:

- A raised heart rate,
- Seizures, fits and heart attacks,
- Mental health issues (anxiety, paranoia) and
- A high risk of addiction.



MDMA

What is it? MDMA, often known as ecstasy or “Molly,” is a synthetic substance widely used in social settings like festivals, nightclubs and raves.

Class of drug MDMA is a Class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). The maximum sentence for possession of a Class A drug like ecstasy is seven years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Less serious offences of possession usually result in going to the magistrates' court, with sentences not exceeding six months and fines of no more than £5,000.

What does it cost? Prices start as low as £5, depending on the quantity of pills bought and their quality.

What is it known as? Brownies, cowies, dolphins, doves, E, eckies, Edward, fantasy, love doves, M and Ms, New Yorkers, sweeties, tulips, X, XTC, MDMA (powder), Mandy, MD, Molly, Mitsubishi's, teddy bears and Superman pills.

What does it look like? Ecstasy comes in pill and powder forms or, very occasionally, as crystals. The powder form is called MDMA. The amount of ecstasy in a tablet can vary greatly. Tablets have been analysed, and some contained no ecstasy but others found to contain some ecstasy but mixed with other drugs. Ecstasy pills are usually taken orally, or they may be crushed up into a powder and snorted. Powder can also be wrapped in cigarette paper and swallowed (“Bombing”).

Can it harm you? MDMA can cause.

- The body's central nervous system to speed up, with effects usually being felt within 60 minutes. Sometimes, a person might think the first pill or cap they took isn't working and take more, which is extremely dangerous.
- MDMA is known for its stimulant and empathogenic effects. This means you're likely to feel more energetic and alert, as well as an increased sense of well-being, emotional warmth and openness toward others.
- MDMA effects also include increased body temperature, dehydration and potential psychological aftereffects like anxiety and depression in the days following use.
- The negative health effects of taking MDMA include higher blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, restlessness and involuntary jaw clenching.
- Studies have shown that regular MDMA use can cause poor sleep, loss of appetite, depression, paranoia and memory or attention problems.



AMPHETAMINES

What is it? Amphetamines are synthetic stimulants. Stimulants are drugs that speed up the body's processes including heart and breathing rate. Amphetamines increase energy levels and alertness. Users may feel more confident, happy and powerful or creative.

Amphetamines can be used safely to treat some health conditions i.e. for the treatment of narcolepsy. Methylphenidate (Ritalin) is used for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and sometimes used to treat obesity and certain types of depression that do not respond to other treatments.

Class of drug Amphetamines are Class B or controlled drugs that have corresponding penalties, under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

What does it cost? from £13 a gram.

What is it known as? Speed, sulph, sulphate, uppers, wake ups, billy whizz, whizz, whites, base... Methylphenidate, Ritalin. Dexamphetamine, Dexedrine,

Methamphetamine, crystal meth, meth, yaba, crank, glass, Tina, Christine, ice.

What does it look like? usually comes as a white, pink, grey or yellowish powder. It may also come as pills, or a grey putty-like substance known as paste. It is usually sold wrapped in small pieces of paper (wraps).

The appearance of ecstasy varies considerably with there being a wide range of coloured pills and capsules often marked with designs and logos.

Can it harm you? Amphetamines are stimulant drugs, so they speed up the working of your brain and your central nervous system. Some of the immediate effects of amphetamines include:

- Increased heart rate and breathing
- Happiness and confidence
- Alertness, being talkative and restless
- Loss of appetite
- Sweating, dry mouth and jaw clenching
- Nosebleeds and damage to nasal passages (from snorting)
- Amphetamine stimulants have a damaging effect on the brain.
- Dopamine levels can create mood swings. They can harm the body in many ways.
- The heart is majorly affected, with increased and irregular heartbeats and higher blood pressure.
- Long-term risks include memory loss, problems thinking clearly and the chance of stroke.



Drug fact sheet reference source



NHS: Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England, 2021



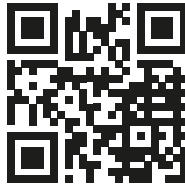
BBC: in-depth Generation K: The disturbing rise of ketamine abuse among young people. Published 25 February 2025



Linwood House: Top 5 most abused drugs in the UK



Drug Facts: A to Z of drugs



Drug Wise: Evidence based information on drugs, alcohol and tobacco



OPTION 4

VAPE QUIZ - QUESTIONS

- Q1** What age can you buy a nicotine vape
- Q2** At what age can you buy a non-nicotine vape.
- Q3** Is vaping as harmful as smoking
- More harmful
 - The same
 - Less harmful
- Q4** Does vaping have side effects
- Yes
 - No
- Q5** Do people use vapes more frequently than cigarettes
- Yes
 - No
- Q6** Are the sale of vapes regulated
- Yes
 - No
- Q7** Does vaping causes 'popcorn lung'
- Yes
 - No
- Q8** Is exposure to vape aerosol (mist) harmful to people around the vaping person.
- Yes
 - No
- Q9** Name 3 or more other names vape are called
- Q10** What percentage of young people aged 11 to 17 have experimented with vaping
- 100 %
 - 20%
 - 40%
 - 80%



Q11 Why do “teens” vape

- Peer pressure/see others do it
- Brain development
- Vaping is seen as fun and exciting
- Have enticing, fruity flavors
- Cheap and easy to buy (especially online)
- All of the above

Q12 Which of the list below are “teens” who vape more at risk of.

- Changes in brain development
- Increased cancer risk
- Increased heart-related problems such as high blood pressure and high heart rate
- Increased irritability and moodiness
- Increased risk of using other substances
- Lung disease and respiratory illnesses
- Reduced self-esteem
- Social isolation from peer groups
- All of the above



VAPE QUIZ – ANSWERS

Q1 What age can you buy a nicotine vape

Vaping devices are used across the globe but with each country the regulations differ. Some have tighter regulations than others, some stipulate limiting regulations such as flavour bans, but one thing is universal. Age restrictions can be seen around the world and are ever present on the packaging and vape products on shelves. But the age you are permitted to vape does differ depending on your country.

UK – 18 years

USA – 21 years

Canada – 18 years or 19 years (varies between provinces)

EU – 18 years

Australia – 18 years (but only with a GP prescription). In certain locations like Victoria and New South Wales, laws allow people over 18 years old to possess up to two nicotine-containing vape products without fear of criminal prosecution providing they don't purchase these items within the territory itself.

Brazil – 18 years

China – 18 years

Japan – 20 years

South Korea – 19 years

United Arab Emirates – 18 years

Q2 What age can you buy a non-nicotine vape.

UK – 18 years.

European Countries - Non-nicotine vapes are generally available to individuals under 18 in most European countries because, according to several experts, they lack the toxicity of nicotine and often contain vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial substances. However, you must be careful. Governments are increasingly scrutinising these products, and regulations may be tightened.

USA - 21 years 21 to buy and use non-nicotine cigarettes.

Canada – 18 years, although in some provinces it may be higher.

Australia - 18 years.

Q3 Is vaping as harmful as smoking

Less harmful (Number 3). Nicotine vaping is not risk-free, but it is substantially less harmful than smoking. Current review of the international evidence and found that “in the short and medium-term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking”. But vaping still exposes users to some potentially harmful and addictive substances, such as nicotine and flavourings linked to lung disease. We don't yet know what the risks might be in the longer term.

**Q4 Does vaping have side effects**

Yes - Vaping does have some side effects. It can make you cough, give you a dry and irritated mouth and throat, and cause headaches. Long-term risks of vaping are not known.

Q5 Do people use vapes more frequently than cigarettes

Yes - It is normal for a person to vape more frequently than they used to smoke, and this is not more harmful. Vaping is different from smoking in the way it delivers nicotine to the brain. With smoking, the person smoking gets a very quick hit in the short time it takes to smoke a cigarette. With vaping, generally it takes longer for nicotine to reach the brain, and the person needs to “sip” on the vape more frequently.

Q6 Are the sale of legal vapes regulated

UK - Yes, all products for sale must be notified to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) with detailed information including a listing of all ingredients. However, some disposable vapes on sale are illegal and do not meet UK safety regulations. They can contain high levels of harmful substances.

USA - Food and Drug Administration (FDA): The FDA regulates vapes and related products (e.g., vape juice, heating elements). Since 2016, under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, manufacturers must register products and face restrictions on advertising, sales, and packaging.

EU - are primarily governed by the Tobacco Products Directive (TPD):

China - State Administration for Market Regulation

Australia - enforces strict regulations around vapes, especially concerning nicotine-containing vape liquids. Nicotine Regulation: The law makes nicotine-containing vape liquids illegal in Australia, and people can only purchase such products with a prescription from a doctor. Public Use Restrictions: Authorities highly regulate vaping in public places, subjecting it to restrictions similar to those for tobacco smoking.

Canada - regulates vapes through the Tobacco and Nicotine Act: Nicotine Concentration: The law limits vape liquids to a maximum of 66 mg/ml of nicotine. Advertising and Promotion: Authorities impose strict limits on advertising, and they prohibit vape promotion in most forms of media.

Q7 Does vaping cause ‘popcorn lung’

No. Vaping does not cause “popcorn lungs”, the common name for a rare disease called bronchiolitis obliterans. The disease was found in a group of factory workers exposed to a chemical (diacetyl) used to flavor popcorn. Diacetyl is a chemical used as an artificial food flavoring. It is often used to flavor candy, popcorn, and baked goods. Diacetyl is also present in many e-cigarettes sold in the United States. Diacetyl is contained in cigarette smoke, but it is banned as an ingredient in UK-regulated nicotine vapes and e-liquids. Diacetyl was banned from vape products sold in the European Union in 2016 and Australia in 2024.



Q8 Is exposure to vape aerosol (mist) harmful to people around the vaping person.

No - there is no evidence so far that vaping is harmful to people around the vaping person. However, the longer-term effects of vaping are still not known.

Q9 Name 3 or more other names vape are called

e-cigarettes / cigse / hookah/ liquidspuff / barsvape / pensvape / podsvape / sticks

Q10 In 2023, what percentage of young people aged 11 to 17 have experimented with vaping

20% (Number 2) Almost one in five – of 11- to 17-year-olds have tried vaping,

Q11 Why do “teens” vape

All of the above (number 6). When young people think their peers are observing them, they are more likely to take risks – the reward response is amplified. This has been linked with teenagers being more predisposed to risky health behaviour, like vaping.

Young people might start vaping to fit in or to impress their peers by experimenting with new things. Young people are at a critical age where they are learning to assert their independence and place more value on the approval and support of their peers than their parents. Teenagers' brains are more sensitive to the feelings and excitement derived from taking risks than adults' brains are.

There are huge numbers of posts on social media platforms that position vaping as exciting and fun to teenagers. Popular and trending hashtags include #vapetricks, #vapefam and #vapelife. These serve to create connections and draw teenagers into a community, feeding into their need for social approval among their peers.

Q12 Which of the list below are “teens” who vape more at risk of

All of the above (number 9). Vaping is not for children and young people. Their developing lungs and brains mean they are more sensitive to its effects. We know the brain continues to develop until the age of 25. Nicotine exposure can alter the chemistry of a developing brain, affecting memory, concentration and learning. Vaping and the toxic compounds found in e-cigarettes, like lead and formaldehyde, can lead to a risk of all the above.



PARENTS HANDOUT - LEGAL HIGHS FACT SHEET

WHAT ARE 'LEGAL HIGHS'?

Legal highs are a commonly used but inaccurate term, describing a range of synthetic drugs that have come onto the drug scene since 2008/09. The more accurate term for this group of drugs is 'new (or novel) psychoactive substances' or NPS. NPS are commonly known as "legal highs," "bath salts," "research chemicals," "designer drugs," or "synthetic drugs."

While many of these drugs were once legal, with the advent of new laws (e.g. the UK Psychoactive Substances Act 2016) it is now illegal to produce, supply, or import them for human consumption – including for personal use. Possession for personal use is not an offence, unless in prison.

'Legal highs' cannot be sold for human consumption, so to exploit loopholes in legislation they are often sold as incense, salts or plant food.

The main effects of almost all 'psychoactive' drugs, including 'legal highs', can be described using three main categories:

1. **Synthetic cannabinoids** – mimic cannabis and are traded under such names as Clockwork Orange, Black Mamba, Spice and Exodus Damnation. They bear no relation to the cannabis plant except that the chemicals which are blended into the base plant matter act on the brain in a similar way to cannabis.
2. **Stimulants** - mimic substances such as amphetamine, cocaine and ecstasy and include BZP, mephedrone, MPDV, NRG-1, Benzo Fury, MDAI, ethylphenidate.
3. **'Downers' or sedatives** - mimic tranquiliser or anti-anxiety drugs, in particular from the benzodiazepine family and include Etizolam, Pyrazolam and Flubromazepam.
4. **Psychedelics or hallucinogens** mimic substances like LSD and include 25i-NBOMe, Bromo- Dragonfly and the more ketamine-like methoxetamine.

NPS are sold online and in shops (although they were banned in the UK from 2016). The drugs come in brightly coloured packaging under a variety of brand names. The packaging may describe a list of ingredients but it's impossible to be sure what's inside and the contents of one branded package could change from week to week.

Legal highs are usually sold as powders, pills, smoking mixtures, liquids, capsules, or on perforated tabs.

The effects of NPS vary significantly from drug to drug and compared to more traditional drugs, we have relatively little information on them. What we do know is that many 'legal highs' and have been directly linked to poisoning, emergency hospital admissions including into mental health services and, in some cases, have led to death.



**PARENTS HANDOUT - VAPING FACT SHEET**

Vapes are also known as e-cigarettes, pods, e-hookah, e-liquids, puff bars, vape pens, vape sticks and mods.

There are a battery-operated device filled with an e-liquid or juice, vapes work by heating a liquid. The liquid typically contains nicotine propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine and flavourings, some of which may be potentially harmful to the body. When heated, the nicotine changes into a vapour. The nicotine and other ingredients are inhaled into the body

Vaping is not for young people. Their developing lungs and brains mean they are more sensitive to its effects. Nicotine vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it is not risk-free. Vaping exposes users to some toxins, and we do not yet know what the risks might be in the longer term. Some of the shorter side effects to vaping are:

- coughing
- dry mouth and throat
- shortness of breath
- mouth and throat irritation
- headaches

Sharing vapes could lead to young people inhaling illicit substances without realising.

