

'Legal Highs' Fact Sheet



What are 'Legal Highs'?

'Legal Highs' are substances which produce the same or similar effects, to drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy, but are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act. They are however, considered illegal under current medicines legislation to sell, supply or advertise for "human consumption". To get round this sellers refer to them as research chemicals, plant food, bath crystals or pond cleaner.

In many cases, 'legal highs' have been designed to mimic class A drugs, but are structurally different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act however a recent amendment to this act has made certain compounds found within some 'Legal Highs', class B drugs and therefore illegal to sell.

There are a large number of 'Legal Highs':

Most 'legal highs' are sold in small packets containing pellets/tablets, powder or a herbal mixture and have such names as Chillem Blue, Puff Adder, Matrix Fury, China White, Gogaine and many more. There is little or no information available on packets regarding the composition of what is inside, many packets will have a message such as 'not for human consumption' and 'not to be sold to under 18's' although clearly they are sold for human consumption and under 18 sales are common.

Are 'Legal Highs' safe?

For many 'legal highs' there has been very little or no useful research into their short, medium and long term effects on people. While this means that specific advice can't often be provided, there are certain key facts common to all 'legal highs':

- Just because a drug is legal to possess, it doesn't mean it is safe.
- It is becoming increasingly clear that 'legal highs' are far from harmless and can have similar health risks to drugs like cocaine, ecstasy and speed.
- 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 are actually illegal to possess. What you may think is a legal high that you can't get in trouble for having, could be something completely different, and in fact a class B drug.

How do ‘Legal High’s affect the body?

Risks of ‘legal highs’ can include reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, coma, seizures, and death.

Who is Taking ‘Legal Highs’ in Essex?

Whilst some conventional drug users are experimenting with ‘Legal Highs’, evidence suggests that young people who do not fit the profile of drug users or exhibit high levels of risk behaviours are also taking Legal Highs as they believe that as these drugs are ‘Legal’, they must be alright to take. An increasing number of young people of school age are presenting to Hospital A & E Departments in Essex after taking these drugs but because doctors are not aware of the compounds which have been taken, treatment is difficult.

Where are young people accessing’ Legal Highs’?

Legal Highs are available from the internet and ‘head shops’. A head shop is a shop that sells drug paraphernalia, eg. Equipment (pipes and bongs) for smoking cannabis, as well as recreational drugs that are legal to sell (though not legal to sell for human consumption). These shops may also sell magazines and clothes designed to appeal to young people who identify with this subculture. While head shops may claim they are selling these drugs for use such as plant fertiliser or bath salts, they sell them alongside drug-taking paraphernalia which suggests otherwise.

What help is available locally?

In an emergency visit your local A&E department. However if you wish to talk to somebody locally call 0844 4991323 or text Choices to 80800

We are urging Teachers and Parents be aware of this increasing problem both within and outside the school setting. They can help by ensuring they have accurate and up to date knowledge about ‘Legal Highs’ in order to make young people aware of the risks.

For further information visit

www.talktofrank.com/