

New psychoactive substances – NPS

NEWSLETTER

July 2021

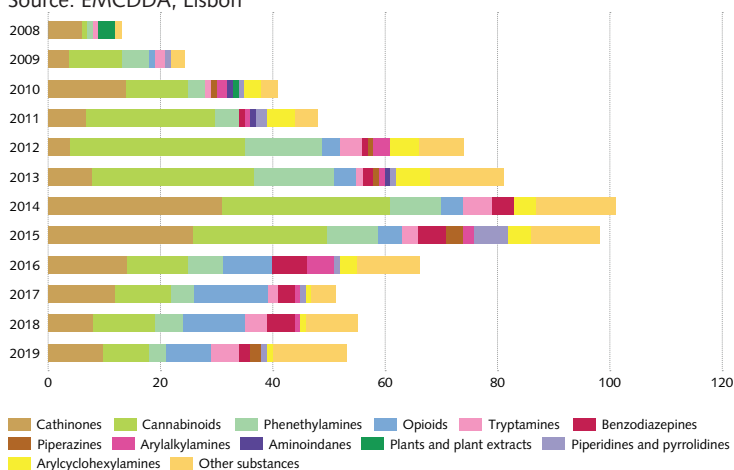


They never quite made the big time

When the first psychoactive substances (NPS for short) appeared on the market at the turn of the century, many people feared that they would flood the market and dazzle consumers. These drugs, often sold as “bath salts”, “air freshener” or “plant food”, were legal and relatively inexpensive. However, this assumption proved false. The sale and consumption of NPS has stagnated at a low level and, in some cases, even declined.

When the sale of NPS first began, dealers claimed that these substances couldn't be harmful because they weren't illegal. Since then, however, it has become widely known among consumers that NPS have unpredictable side-effects, ranging from circulatory collapse to psychosis and even death. As little research has been done on these substances and emergency response teams have had barely any training in this area, being

Number and substance classes of new psychoactive substances first reported to the EU Early Warning System between 2008 and 2019.
Source: EMCDDA, Lisbon

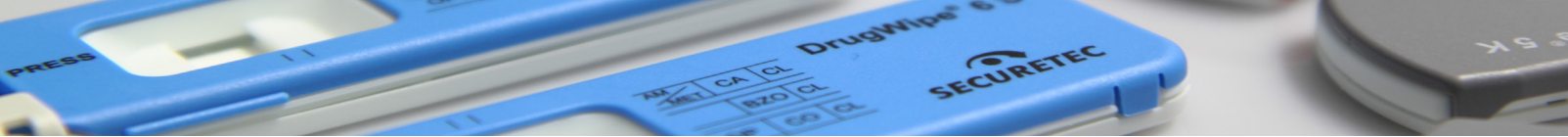


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admitted to hospital provides no guarantee of recovery. In many cases, the reason for the patient's poor condition is not identified or there is no proven counteragent to administer. The continued appeal of these psychoactive substance is due, above all, to the fact that they are still partly legal—even if this status is only temporary.

Legislators worldwide have become more effective in dealing with NPS and new, modified versions are being classed as illegal with increasing efficiency. Legislation is supported by improved analysis methods and by the fact that entire substance groups are now being banned, rather than individual substances—as in the early days of



NPS. This is increasingly acting as a deterrent for potential consumers.

NPS – what exactly are they?

New psychoactive substances (NPS) is a collective term to describe a wide and diverse range of chemically manufactured drugs. This includes stimulants, synthetic cannabinoids, benzodiazepines, opioids, hallucinogens and dissociatives.

These substances go by many different names. The designations “designer drugs”, “legal highs”, “herbal highs”, “research chemicals” and “bath salt drugs” are umbrella terms. Meanwhile, “spice”, “toilet cleaner”, “air freshener”, “bath salts” and “plant food” are misnomers used to label the end products, usually in conjunction with an appealing packaging design. Synthetic cannabinoids are usually sold with names suggestive of plant-based products. Products sold as bath salts are usually synthetic cathinones.

These substances are sold as herbal mixtures or as crystals, powder, pills or capsules. Liquid variants are also available. The drugs are smoked, swallowed, injected, or snorted like cocaine.

Every time a person consumes an NPS, they are essentially embarking on an experiment with an unknown outcome. The result is always uncertain, regardless of which substance is taken and in which form. As they are not manufactured by professionals, NPS vary widely in their content, no declaration is provided on the packaging, and each individual sachet in a pack may

Outlawed worldwide

NPS are available worldwide. Most countries are working on making these substances illegal. Countries where they are manufactured have also committed to combating these drugs. These include China, where a new regulation governing cannabinoid substances has come into effect on 1 July.

Most European states are acting in concert on this issue. Shortly after the turn of the century, the EU Commission recommended entire substance groups to be used as a basis for the legal control of NPS. In Germany, the New Psychoactive Substances Act (“Neue-psychoaktive-Stoffe-Gesetz”, NpSG) was introduced in 2016 and amended in 2019 and 2020. Corresponding legislation has been in place in Austria since 2012 and in Switzerland since 2011. Great Britain imposed a general ban on psychoactive substances in 2016.

contain varying quantities of active ingredients. NPS have received a lot of bad press recently, in particular due to their dangerous side-effects and a growing number of deaths linked to their use.

NPS produce a high similar to that produced by LSD and induce a state of relaxation. In many cases, however, consumers become more aggressive, overestimate their own abilities and lose touch with reality—making them a danger both to themselves and to those around them (e.g., when driving under the influence).



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Securetec Detektions-Systeme AG
Lilienthalstrasse 7
85579 Neubiberg – Germany
T +49 89 203080-1651
F +49 89 203080-1652
info@securetec.net / www.securetec.net
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70562-EN-v01-2021-06-29
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The DrugWipe saliva test on YouTube:



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