

LEGAL HIGHS

There are many substances being used which fall into the term 'legal highs', they may be legal but contain a range of harmful chemicals. Here are few of the most common ones;

- 2CB-Fly – a synthetic phenethylamine
- 5-MeO-AMT
- LSA
- Bromo-Dragonfly
- Meow or Mcat

What you need to know

- You can't know exactly what you're taking if you take a 'legal high', so the effects can be very unpredictable.
- Just because they are legal to possess doesn't mean they are safe.
- Most of these substances are illegal to sell, supply, or advertise for human consumption, under medicines legislation, because of their effects on the body.
- Legal highs can contain a range of potentially dangerous chemicals, and their chemical makeup changes all the time - so you can never be 100% certain what you have bought, and what the effects might be.
- The chemicals in legal highs have, in most cases, never before been used as drugs, so have had no tests performed on them to show that they are safe. Nor do they have a long history of use, so that health problems would have become apparent.
- Legal highs can carry serious health risks.

The risks

- You increase the risk to yourself if you combine alcohol with any substance that causes a 'high', including the risk of death.
- Other risks of legal highs include reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, coma, seizures, and death.
- Because legal highs are often new and, in many cases, their chemical make-up is constantly changing, the risks are unpredictable and are often still being assessed.

Currently one of the most commonly talked about 'legal highs' is referred to as "Meow" or "Mcat". This is different to "Ket" Ketamine is illegal.

Meow meow, Mcat,



LEGAL

Slang: Street names for drugs can vary around the country. Mieow, Meow, Meph, Mephedrone, MCAT, 4MMC

Cathinone is a naturally occurring stimulant found in the khat plant and cathinones are a group of drugs related to amphetamine compounds like ecstasy. Cathinone derivatives are currently being sold online and in headshops as 'legal highs'. These include;

4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC) and also known as:

Mephedrone. A stimulant drug with effects similar to MDMA producing euphoria, alertness, talkativeness and feelings of empathy. It can also cause anxiety and paranoid states and risk over stimulating the heart and nervous system to cause fits. Severe nosebleeds have been reported after snorting. Mephedrone has been linked to the death of a young woman in Sweden in 2008. A white or off-white powder usually sold on the internet as a legal high and described as a plant food or a research chemical not for human consumption. Sometimes mixed with other cathinones and caffeine.

Reports say that it can be compulsive to use and can create a state of psychological dependence.

Methylone Very similar to mephedrone.

MCAT A powerful psychoactive stimulant usually snorted but can be smoked and may be used by other routes.

The law

Currently it is illegal under medicines legislation to sell, supply or advertise cathinone compounds for human consumption. Cathinone and some of its derivatives are already controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (e.g. Cathinone itself; Methcathinone), but ...

most substituted cathinones are not controlled. These include: 4-Methylmethcathinone (**Mephedrone, 4-MMC**); 4-Methoxymethcathinone (**Methadrone**) and **Methylone** (the cathinone analogue of MDMA).

Ketamine

Ketamine is a short-acting but powerful general anaesthetic which depresses the nervous system and causes a temporary loss of body sensation. That's why it has been used for operating on humans and animals. It has powerful hallucinogenic qualities (with a distortion of objects and reality).

Slang: Street names for drugs can vary around the country. Green, K, special K, super K, vitamin k



The effects

- Ketamine can cause perceptual changes or hallucinations like LSD, in addition to its effects on reducing bodily sensation. Users can trip for up to an hour and may feel after-effects for some hours.
- It can give the user a floating feeling as if the mind and body have been separated.
- You can become psychologically but not physically dependent on ketamine (which means you can develop the desire to keep taking it in spite of potential harm but without any withdrawal effects on stopping use).

You may need to take increasing amounts of ketamine to achieve the same effect (tolerance).

The law

Ketamine is a Class C drug which means that it's illegal to possess it and to supply it. Possession can get you up to two years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you 14 years in jail and/or an unlimited fine.

Appearance and use

Legally produced ketamine comes in liquid form which is usually injected. The illegally produced version usually comes as a grainy white powder which is usually snorted but it may also be obtained as a tablet.

Purity

Legally produced ketamine will be pure. But illegally produced tablets are commonly found with ephedrine added (which is commonly used for treatment of allergies and asthma). Sometimes these are passed off as ecstasy.

The risks

- Users may be physically incapable of moving while under the influence.
- Ketamine can cause panic attacks, depression, and taken in large doses, can make existing mental health problems worse.
- Because you don't feel any pain when you're on ketamine, you can injure yourself badly and not know you've done it.
- High doses, especially with other depressant drugs like alcohol, can dangerously suppress breathing and heart function and can lead to unconsciousness.
- Ketamine is very dangerous when mixed with ecstasy or amphetamines. It can result in high blood pressure.
- If high enough doses are taken, the anesthetic effect can result in death, for example due to unconsciousness and inhalation of vomit.
- There have been recent reports in the medical literature of serious bladder and related problems found in ketamine users.