

## Prohibition of Synthetic Cannabinoids (Synthetic Cannabis)

In July 2011, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing amended the *Poisons Standard 2012* to prohibit a range of synthetic compounds that mimic the effect of cannabis (synthetic cannabinoids).

On 1 May 2012, the ban was extended to include 'synthetic cannabinomimetics'. This broadly prohibits all synthetic cannabinoids even if they are not listed under Schedule 9 of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons.

The ACT has automatically adopted these changes under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*. This means that it is illegal to manufacture, obtain, possess, supply, sell and/or use synthetic cannabinoids in the ACT.

### ***What is synthetic cannabis?***

Synthetic cannabis includes a range of synthetic compounds that mimic the effects of the active component in cannabis, delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Synthetic cannabis can be found in products with brand names such as Kronic, Northern Lights, Kaos, Spice, Mango and Voodoo. These products usually consist of dried herbs that are sprayed with synthetic chemicals, which are then smoked for their cannabis-like effects.

Synthetic cannabis, like natural cannabis, can cause memory and cognitive impairment in small doses. Heavy and regular use may cause:

- Hallucinations
- Confusion
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Problems with memory
- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- Heart palpitations.

The long-term health effects of continued use of synthetic cannabis are not known. However, there have been reports of users experiencing addiction and withdrawal symptoms associated with these products.

Synthetic cannabis products are not subject to Australian safety, quality and production standards. The type, quality and quantity of chemicals that these products contain are not known. Synthetic cannabinoids pose a serious health risk to consumers and the immediate health effects to individuals are largely unpredictable. People should not assume that synthetic cannabinoids are safe.

### ***Local contact points***

Further information regarding the ban on synthetic cannabinoids can be obtained by contacting the Health Protection Service on 02 6205 1700 between 9:30am and 4:30pm Monday to Friday.

For further information about health issues associated with cannabis, please contact your doctor or the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Services Division 24-Hour Helpline on 02 6207 9977.

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