Legal highs

Substances that mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as ecstasy and speed, but are not controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act

What are legal highs?

Recent changes have been made to the availability of many of these drugs, making it illegal to sell them without a legitimate license under the control of the Medicines Act.

Herbal Ecstasy

Herbal ecstasy has until recently been sold freely at dance events, clubs, concerts and festivals. It contains various herbs and extracts that are claimed to be hallucinogenic and/or stimulants.

Packaging and vendors claim that they are a natural and safe substitute for ecstasy. Although they may be herbal or a herbal extract they are not necessarily safe, with side effects similar to synthetic drugs.

Ephedrine is an extract of the Chinese herb Ma Huang (from the tree ephedra sinensis) which has been reported to have stimulant effects such as shivers up and down the spine, sensitive skin and muscles, and feelings of exhilaration. In China the herb Ma Huang is sold as a medicine and as an aphrodisiac. In the UK, it is sold as Cloud 9, Nirvana Plus, and other herbal highs said to mimic ecstasy.

Higher doses can be quite unpleasant, possibly causing muscle spasms and even heart attacks. These drugs should not be used by people with heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, or kidney disease. Side effects include racing heart, dry throat, anxiety, tremor and cold feet and hands.

Yohimbine

Marketed as an aphrodisiac (and often referred to as herbal Viagra) and sold as a hallucinogenic with stimulant effects in some natural high capsules such as Yohimbix8 or as an additive to other herbal highs. Yohimbine is derived from the West African Yohimba tree roots or bark, Corynanthe yohimbe or Pausinystalia yohimba. The drug increases the availability of noradrenaline (a 'fight or flight' hormone that stimulates the body) that in turn raises blood pressure and increases heart rate. The hallucinations are said to be quite strong and the effects on the body similar to that of ecstasy.

Salvia

Salvia is derived from the American plant Salvia divinorum, a member of the mint family. It is used by the Mazatecs and others in Meso America in shaman rituals and healing.

It is marketed in the UK as herbal ecstasy using names such as Eclipse. It is purchased dried for smoking (in large amounts) or as a herbal remedy under its botanical name. It's effects are more hallucinatory than other legal highs - though high doses are usually needed to achieve these effects. The main active ingredient is thought to be salvinorum A.
Other Sources of information

Local organisations that offer Assessment & Treatment options for people with addictions:

**SMART** – Substance Misuse Assessment & Referral Team Poole
- Tel 01202 735777

**BEAT** – Bournemouth Engagement and Assessment Team - Tel 01202 558855

**YADAS** – Tel 01202 741414
[www.edasuk.org/treatment/poole/poole-yadas/](http://www.edasuk.org/treatment/poole/poole-yadas/)

**REACH YP** – Tel 0800 0434656
[www.edasuk.org/treatment/dorset/sh/](http://www.edasuk.org/treatment/dorset/sh/)

**ADDACTION** – Tel 01202 558855
[www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

**EDP** – Tel 01305 571264 - email info@edp.org.uk

National organisations that offer treatment, advice, information & support for people with addictions:

**Alcohol Change** –
Tel 020 3907 8480
[www.alcoholchange.org.uk](http://www.alcoholchange.org.uk)

**FRANK** – Tel 0300 1236600
Text 82111
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

Contact us: Helpline 01202 733322 (Weekdays 8.30am to 4.30pm, 24-hour answer phone)
Email: admin@edasuk.org
EDAS Head Office - 56 Ashley Road, Parkstone, Poole BH14 9BN

Statement
Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

Disclaimer:
While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches then it is advisable to consult your GP to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

ID: ED-DS-21112011v2
Literature search completed: Drugscope - October 2012
Sheet published: October 2012
Review Date: October 2013

[www.edasuk.org](http://www.edasuk.org) Registered Charity No. 900565 admin@edasuk.org