

## 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

<p>Local organisations that offer Assessment &amp; Treatment options for people with addictions:</p> <p><b>EDAS</b> – Mental Health and Alcohol &amp; Substance Misuse Support in Poole Tel 01202 735777 <a href="mailto:hello@edasuk.org">hello@edasuk.org</a> <a href="http://www.edasuk.org">www.edasuk.org</a></p> <p><b>EDAS/REACH YP</b> – Free and confidential drug and alcohol service for under 25s who live in the Borough of Poole and County of Dorset Tel 0800 0434656 <a href="http://www.edasuk.org/yp">www.edasuk.org/yp</a></p> <p><b>WE ARE WITH YOU</b> Tel 01202558855 <a href="http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk">www.wearewithyou.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>EDP</b> Tel 01305 571264 <a href="mailto:info@edp.org.uk">info@edp.org.uk</a></p>		<p>National organisations that offer treatment, advice, information &amp; support for people with addictions:</p> <p><b>ALCOHOL CHANGE</b> Tel 020 3907 8480 <a href="http://www.alcoholchange.org.uk">www.alcoholchange.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>FRANK</b> Tel 0300 1236600 Text 82111 <a href="http://www.talktofrank.com">www.talktofrank.com</a></p>
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Contact us: Helpline 01202 735777 (Weekdays 8:30am to 4:00pm, 24-hour answer phone)

Email: [hello@edasuk.org](mailto:hello@edasuk.org)

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