



Parental Information - Legal Highs

University of Toronto

Legal Highs and the Law

The Psychoactive Substances Act ('the Act') was passed on 28 January 2016 and commenced on 26 May 2016. The Act introduces a blanket ban on the production and distribution of psychoactive substances, defined as any substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it (and which is not an exempted substance).

Section 2(1) defines psychoactive substances for the purpose of the Act as: 'any substance which (a) is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it and (b) is not an exempted substance.'

Section 2 goes on to clarify that: 'a substance produces a psychoactive effect in a person if, by stimulating or depressing the person's central nervous system, it affects the person's mental functioning or emotional state' and that: 'a person consumes a substance if a person causes or allows the substance or fumes given off by the substance to enter the person's body in any way.'

What are Legal Highs?

New psychoactive substances, often misleadingly referred to as 'legal highs', is an umbrella term for products that are largely intended to mimic the effects of controlled drugs. New psychoactive substances can be consumed as either: smoking substances, powders (for snorting or injecting), tablets, and liquids. They can be synthetic or herbal material, such as fungi or plant based and can be grouped according to the type of drug they are designed to mimic: • synthetic cannabinoids • stimulant type drugs • hallucinogenic • opiates.

Mixed Messages

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) or so called "legal highs" present a danger because:

- they are easily accessible.
- they are constantly being adapted to avoid legislative control.
- they may not necessarily hold the same perceived threat to health and well-being as illegal drugs.
- some young people are unaware that just because they are advertised as legal, doesn't mean they are safe or legal - **behaviours.**



KEPIER Safeguarding Update

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“Do we know why young people use NPS?”

Curiosity is one of the reasons that young people might be tempted to use NPS. Of course, for some people, we can't ignore that the enjoyment of the experiences and adventure. The extent to which a young person feels resilient or marginalised will impact misguided perception that these drugs are legal can add to their attraction.

What to do if you're worried

- You can contact the local police force or dial 101 (the non-emergency number). They can talk to you in confidence about your concerns and help you gain access to support and advice.
- Friendly and Confidential drugs advice can be available on FRANK
- **Substances:** <http://www.thedrugswheel.com/>
- **Effects:** http://www.thedrugswheel.com/downloads/TheDrugsWheelEffects_1_6.pdf
- NPS factsheets from Drugswatch
- The Angelus Foundation provides information and advice on “legal highs” as it aims to educate, encourage and assist individuals to be more knowledgeable about the risks to their health and wellbeing of using “legal highs” and other NPS.

