

MAIN GROUPS OF NPS

Aminoindanes

This is a group of substances with stimulant effects mimicking traditional drugs such as cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy.



Synthetic Cathinones

(Mephedrone, Methylone, Pyrovalerone, Naphyrone, etc.)
Are sold as a legal replacement of stimulants such as amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine. They can be found in powder, pills or capsules. Cathinone is an active ingredient of the leaves of the khat plant. The production takes place mostly in China and India, and then substances are imported in Europe where they are processed, packaged and sold as “legal highs” or on illicit market.

Synthetic Cannabinoids

Are sold as a legal replacement of the cannabis. In the last years over than 130 different cannabinoids were reported. Most of these substances were produced in China. When they arrived in Europe, they were found mostly in powder, and then they have been added to plant materials and sold as “legal highs”. These substances are sold as herbal mixtures or herbal blend that let the consumers think that they are using natural herbs similar to cannabis, while their effects are due to the presence of synthetic compounds. JWH-018 is considered to be three times potent than THC.

Phenethylamines

Some Phenethylamines derive from amphetamine, methamphetamine, but they also include ring substituted substances, such as 2C - NBOMe, 2CB, 2C-H, 2C-E, DOB, DOC. The Service of drug checking in Switzerland (www.danno.ch) identified blotters of 25NMBOE sold as LSD. Sniffing and swallowing in the form of blotters are the most common modes of administration. Young people using these substances describe effects similar to the MDMA. Doses must be lower than other traditional drugs such as LSD or MDMA because of their powerful effects.

Synthetic Opioids

Have similar effects to heroin, but they are sold as designer drugs by European and Chinese online shops. They are often used nonmedically as anaesthetics and analgesics. The most famous opioid, because of its dangerous effects, is Fentanyl, an analgesic similar to morphine but much more potent. Street names: Apache, China girl, China white, dance fever, friend, goodfella, jackpot, murder 8, TNT, Tango and Cash.

Tryptamines

Are known as serotonergic hallucinogens; they can be of both natural or synthetic origin. Natural tryptamines include serotonin, melatonin, bufotenin, 11O 5-Methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT) and dimethyltryptamine (DMT) that can be found in the ayahuasca, a brew made by a mixture of plants, used in shamanic rituals in Amazonia. Tryptamines are generally swallowed, sniffed, and more rarely injected. They are usually sold on Internet as research chemicals. Doses can vary from 60 to 100 mg if smoked, from 20 to 50 mg if snorted, from 2 to 3 mg if injected.

Ketamine & pcp-type substances

Ketamine is a human and animal anaesthetic that, depending on dosage, can be a strong psychedelic. Ketamine was produced for the first time in 1963 in Belgium as a substitute of Phencyclidine (PCP or Angel dust), an anaesthetic used in the 1950s that was later banned because of its hallucinogenic and delirium effects. Ketamine can be found in powder to snort, or in liquid form to swallow. The most famous derivative is Methoxetamine-Street names: K, special K, kit kat, Tac, Cat valium, Cat tranquilizer, Vitamin K, ket, Super K.

Piperazines

Are known and used as stimulants. “Piperazines have been described as ‘failed pharmaceuticals’, as some had been evaluated as potential therapeutic agents by pharmaceutical companies but never brought to the market”. 11 Piperazines are usually sold as ecstasy, and can be found in form of capsules, or powder. Street names: pep, pills, party pills, Jax, A2, Benny Bear, Flying Angel, Legal E or Legal X, Pep X, Pep Love or Nemesis, 3CPP, 3CI-PP or CPP.

Plant-based substances

Include: Khat (according to UNODC, the second most popular plant-based substance, after salvia divinorum, reported by Member States from 2009 to 2012), Kratom (recently reported on NPS market) and Salvia Divinorum. Salvia divinorum is a Mexican psychoactive plant, whose leaves contain psychoactive chemicals that produce hallucinations when chewed or dried and smoked. It is mainly sold on headshops online as ‘herbal ecstasy’.

Benzodiazepines

Are widely used in medicine to treat anxiety and insomnia. These are synthetic substances normally seen as pharmaceutically-manufactured tablets, capsules and occasionally as injectable. UNODC includes these substances in the Group “Other Substances”;