



Australian Government
Department of Defence

New psychoactive substances

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

What are new psychoactive substances?

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are a range of drugs that have been made with chemicals to mimic the properties and effects of more established and known drugs like LSD, amphetamines and cannabis. NPS are made to avoid the restrictions that are imposed on other illicit drugs.

Manufacturers are constantly changing the chemicals in these drugs in an attempt to stay ahead of the law. As soon as the new drug is identified by the authorities, it is made illegal. It is for this reason that they are often marketed as 'legal highs'. Other names include herbal highs, party pills, herbal ecstasy or bath salts.

Are they safer than established illicit drugs?

This is one of the biggest misconceptions about NPS. Even though they are sometimes advertised as legal, this doesn't mean they are safe. Given how rapidly new drugs are emerging, it is difficult to know the common effects of these drugs and what dose causes what effects.

NPS do not typically come with a recommended dosage printed on the label. They are unregulated and untested. Given the chemicals in these drugs are constantly changing to try to stay ahead of the law, it's possible to receive a very different product from batch to batch, even if the packaging and name are the same.

NPS are relatively new, so there is limited information available about their short and long-term effects. However, synthetic cannabis has been reported to have more serious side-effects than cannabis.

Are they legal?

The laws surrounding NPS are complex, constantly changing, and differ between states/territories, but in general they are increasingly becoming stronger.

In Queensland, New South Wales, and South Australia there is now a 'blanket ban' on possessing or selling any substance that has a psychoactive effect other than alcohol, tobacco and food.

In other states and territories in Australia, specific NPS are banned and new ones are regularly added to the list of banned drugs. This means that a drug that was legal to sell or possess today, may be illegal tomorrow. The substances banned differ between these states/territories.

Types of NPS

The three most common types of new psychoactive substances are known as:

- party pills and pellets
- synthetic cannabis
- research chemicals and drug analogues.

Party pills and pellets

Party pills and pellets are sometimes marketed as natural supplements that increase energy or mood, with effects similar to ecstasy or amphetamines. However, these products can contain man-made chemicals and the label often doesn't list the ingredients correctly.

New BZP-free herbal highs commonly list their ingredients as caffeine, octopamine synephrine (citrus aurantium extract) and geranimine (geranium extract), but research on them has demonstrated they are usually made with synthetic chemicals, which are cheaper.

Synthetic cannabis

Synthetic cannabis is produced with man-made chemicals that create similar effects to delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in cannabis. However, reports suggest it also produces additional negative effects. These powdered chemicals are mixed with solvents and added to dried herbs.

Synthetic cannabis is marketed under different brand names including Kronic, Northern Lights, Mojo, Lightning Gold, Lightning Red and Godfather. It is also marketed under other general terms including aphrodisiac tea, herbal incense and potpourri.

Research chemicals

Research chemicals are marketed as pure psychoactive drugs. Similar to other NPS, research has not been conducted on how they affect humans. Many of the active ingredients in herbal highs/party pills and synthetic cannabis can be considered research chemicals.

These substances often belong to groups such as cathinones, phenethylamines and tryptamines.

New psychoactive substances and Defence

The legal status of new and emerging drugs is highly complex. Given that the Defence definition of illegal substances is taken directly from the *Customs Act 1901* definitions, NPS are considered to be in contravention of DI(G) 15-5 *Management of the Use or Involvement with Prohibited Substances in the Australian Defence Force* as they are criminalized in the civilian legal system.

The ADF has a zero tolerance policy on the use of illicit drugs by its members. This means that any member found to be using illicit drugs will be required to 'show cause' why they should be permitted to remain in the ADF. The ADF conducts random drug testing of ADF members. Some of the illicit drugs, including new and emerging drugs, remain detectable in urine for some time after use, so a person could return a positive test result even days after they have used a drug.

Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: www.defence.gov.au/dco

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises.

1800 801 026 or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WCS): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.