

NPS and the law

Police may test NPS that are in a young person's possession; if these NPS contain other drugs such as cocaine, LSD or cannabis, as they sometimes do, the young person will be charged for possessing an illegal drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Substances previously referred to as "legal highs" have now been banned.



In May 2016 the law around NPS changed. These substances are no longer legal, which means it is an offence to produce or supply NPS. That includes giving them away for free, even to friends. The police will take action where they find people committing any of these offences, including a punishment of up to 7 years in prison.

Where do I go to get help with NPS?

Young people in Northumberland can access help, advice and support by contacting SORTED on 01670 500150 or 0800 6335872, www.sortednorth.co.uk. You can also access help from the Talk to Frank website at www.talktofrank.com or by calling 0300 1236600.

What can I do if I'm worried about a friend or a family member's use of NPS?

You can talk to them and explain why you're worried about their NPS use. SORTED can provide in-depth help and support for young people using substances 01670 500150 or 0800 6335872. You can also suggest they Talk to Frank 0300 1236600.

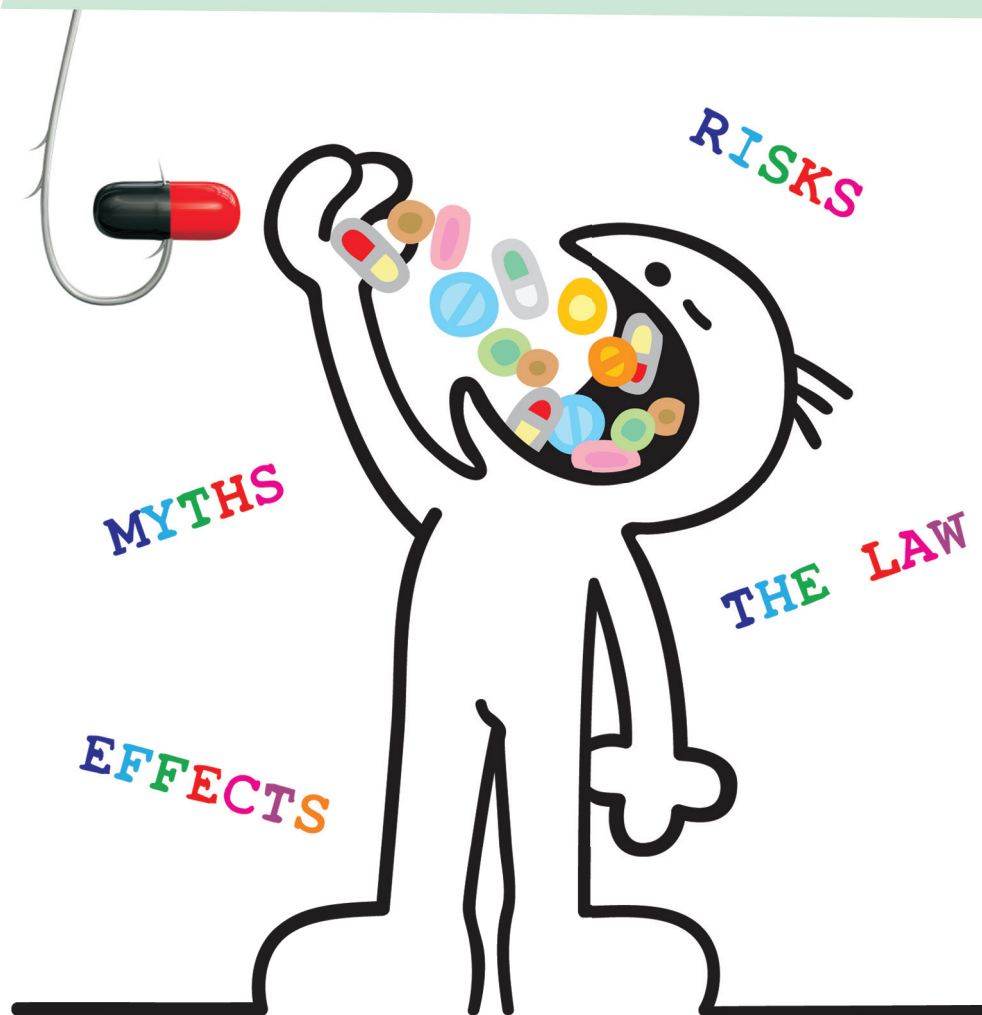
Remember, most young people in Northumberland are not using NPS or taking other drugs.

This leaflet has been produced by Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board, Northumberland Drugs Education Co-ordinator and SORTED, based on an original idea by Northumberland Youth Service and:

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The Highs and Lows of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Here's what you need to know



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What are New Psychoactive Substances?

NPS are substances which produce the same, or similar effects, to other illegal drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis.

NPS cannot be sold for human consumption - they were often sold as bath salts, herbal incense or plant food to get around the law in the past.

What are the effects of NPS?

NPS can be described using three main categories:

Stimulant NPS act like amphetamines ('speed'), cocaine, or ecstasy, in that they can make you feel energised, physically active, fast-thinking, very chatty and euphoric. However, they can make you overconfident and do things you wouldn't normally choose to do. They can also induce feelings of anxiety, panic, confusion, paranoia and can even cause psychosis. They can put a strain on your heart and make it beat too quickly. They may give your immune system a battering so you might be more prone to infections. You may feel quite low for a while after stopping using them.

'Downer' or depressant NPS act in a similar way to benzodiazepines (drugs like Diazepam or Valium), and like GHB/GBL, in that they can make you feel euphoric, relaxed or sleepy and reduce inhibitions and concentration. This can make you feel forgetful and can slow down your reactions. 'Downers' can make you feel tired, physically unsteady and at risk of accidents. They may cause unconsciousness, coma and death, particularly when mixed with alcohol and/or with other depressant drugs. Some people feel very anxious soon after they stop taking 'downers' and if a severe withdrawal symptom develops in heavy drug users, it can be particularly dangerous and may need medical treatment.

Psychodelic or hallucinogenic NPS act like LSD, magic mushrooms, cannabis and ketamine. They can make you hallucinate (seeing and/or hearing things that aren't there). They can also make you feel detached from the world around you and can cause confusion and panic. Some people feel like their mind and body are separated. These NPS can interfere with your judgement, which could put you at risk of acting carelessly or dangerously, and of hurting yourself and others. It can make you act in a way that is not normal for you and make decisions you wouldn't normally make.

Top 'NPS' Myths

NPS have caused a right media hoo-hah, with all sorts of rumours flying around. Here are some of the most common myths.

Myth 1: NPS aren't as strong as other illegal drugs?

True or false? **FALSE**

NPS don't come with a full list of ingredients or strengths so you never know what you're actually getting. You also never really know what effect it's going to have on your body and mind. The actual contents can vary greatly and so you can't really ever be sure how you're going to react.

Myth 2: NPS are safer

True or false? **FALSE**

This is one of the biggest misconceptions about NPS. Any psychoactive substance can affect a person's mental or emotional wellbeing. There has been very little research into the short or long term risks from human consumption of NPS.

Myth 3: It's not an offence to give an NPS to a friend. It's not actually 'supply' if money doesn't change hands.

True or false? **FALSE**

Even if you give any illegal drug away, including NPS, it's still an offence. "What! Even to a friend?" Yes. It's still an offence. We're not just talking about drugs trafficking here. Just sharing an illegal drug with anyone is an offence, whether they pay for it or not.

Myth 4: You can mix NPS with alcohol

True or false? **FALSE**

No! No! No! Don't try. Here's the science. Alcohol is a depressant. This means it slows down the central nervous system which controls your heart and breathing. Mixing alcohol with any drug, including NPS, can seriously upset your body. Combining alcohol with another depressant could shut you down altogether. It can confuse your body and mind and lead you to do things you wouldn't normally choose to do - like drinking a lethal amount of alcohol.

