

Myth 4: You can mix legal highs with alcohol

True or false? FALSE

No! No! No! Don't try. Please. Here's the science. Alcohol is a depressant. **This means it slows down the nervous system which controls your heart and breathing.** Mixing alcohol with any drug, including legal ones, can seriously upset your body. Mixing alcohol with another legal depressant could shut you down altogether. And combining alcohol with a legal stimulant isn't a terrific idea either. 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.

Myth 5: Legal highs are purer

True or false? FALSE

It's supply and demand again. Illegal drugs are more scarce, in demand, and therefore likely to be mixed with all sorts of nasties to stretch out the stock. So that rather expensive line may contain more caffeine than cocaine. There's less of a need to cut legal highs with so much rubbish. But don't assume this makes them safer. It makes them stronger. So if you're snorting a 'legal line' you might not need to take as much and you put yourself at risk of overloading that wonderful body of yours. **Remember, most young people in Northumberland are not taking legal highs or using illegal drugs.**

Myth 6: With legal highs you know what you're getting

True or false? FALSE

Remember just because they're 'legal' for now doesn't mean they're safe.

Because the law is constantly changing around 'legal highs' the chemical make of the drugs has to keep changing. This means you never really know what you are getting.



Where do I go to get help with legal highs?

Most young people in Northumberland can access help, advice and support by contacting SORTED on 01670 500150 or 0800 633 5872, website: www.sortednorth.co.uk. You can also access help from the Talk to Frank Website at www.talktofrank.com or via their helpline on 0800 77 66 00.

What can I do if I am worried about a friend or family member's use of legal highs?

You can talk to them and explain why you are worried about their legal high use. SORTED can provide in-depth help and support for people using substances. You can also suggest they talk to FRANK on 0800 77 66 00.

Remember, most young people in Northumberland are not taking legal highs or using illegal drugs.

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

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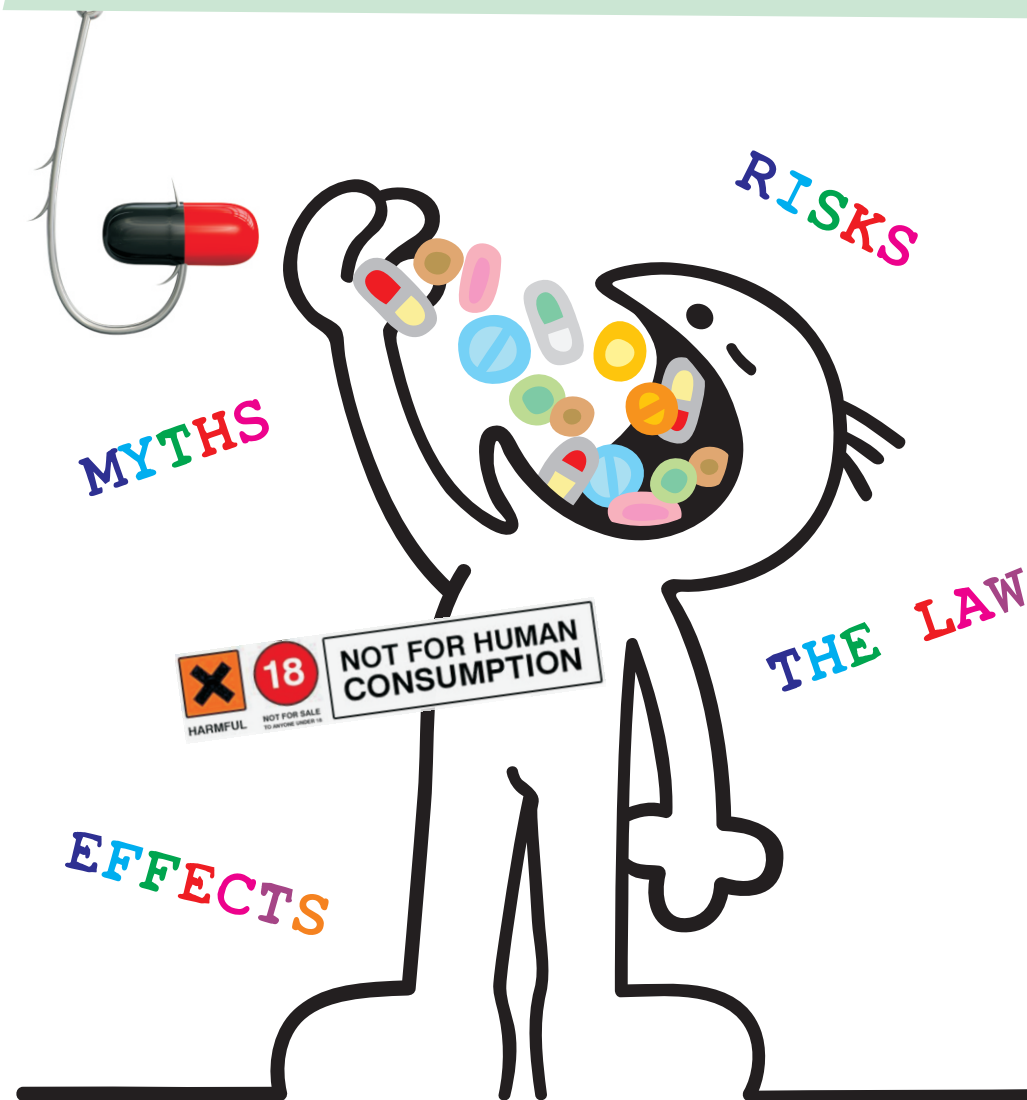


Northumberland
Northumberland County Council



Legal Highs, Lethal Lows

Here's what you need to know



Most young people in Northumberland are not taking legal highs or using illegal drugs.

What are legal highs?

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

'Legal highs' cannot be sold for human consumption so they are often sold as bath salts, herbal incense or plant food to get round the law.

What are the effects of legal highs?

Just because a drug is legal to possess, it doesn't mean its safe. The main effects of almost all 'psychoactive' drugs, including 'legal highs', can be described using three main categories:

- **Stimulant 'legal highs'** 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 'legal highs'** 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.



- **Psychedelic or hallucinogenic 'legal highs'** 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. They can also cause confusion and panic. Some people feel like their mind and body are separated. This 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.



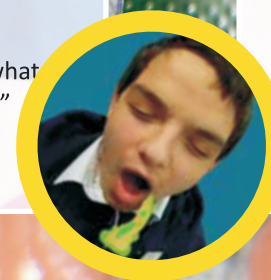
How many legal highs are there?

There are already a large number of legal highs. New substances are being made all of the time, each one with a new set of dangers.

Legal highs and the law?

Just the fact that a substance is sold as "legal", doesn't mean that it's safe – regardless of any "brand name", the actual contents can vary greatly and you can't really be sure what's in a 'legal high' or what effect it's likely to have on you.

Also, some drugs sold as 'legal highs' have been found to contain one or more substances that are, in fact, illegal. The truth is that you cannot be 100% sure what they will contain. A number of substances previously referred to as "legal highs" have now been banned, for example mephedrone, black mamba and mexxy. Being in possession of or supplying these drugs is an offence.



Top 'legal high' myths

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

Myth 1: Legal highs aren't as strong as illegal drugs

True or false? FALSE

Legal highs are **NOT** like medicines, they don't come with a list of ingredients, 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.

Myth 2: Legal highs are safer

True or false? FALSE

This is one of the biggest misconceptions about legal highs. Just because they are technically legal (for now!), doesn't mean they are safe. It just means the **powers-that-be haven't got round to making them illegal yet.** New batches of legal highs are mixed up quickly to dodge new laws and haven't been tested for human consumption. **So you're playing guinea pig,** not safe. Sorry. Just because you may not have a 'bad' reaction one week, doesn't mean you won't be badly affected the next time.

Myth 3: Legal highs are legal. Duh!

True or false? FALSE

"But they are called **LEGAL** highs," you cry. Surely legal is the key word here? But think. Do you really know what's in it? Have you done extensive laboratory tests on it? For all you know you've got an illegal substance there. When tested, many have shown they contain banned substances such as **mephedrone.** So you might think you're on the right side of the law, but ignorance isn't an excuse for possession if **you're caught.** Remember, just because it's 'legal' this week, doesn't mean it will be next week!

