

# WARNING

## **Synthetic cannabinoids ('Spice') mis-sold as 'THC vape'/'cannabis oil'/'THC vape pens'.**

The Greater Manchester Drug Alert Panel issued a public warning in July 2019 concerning mis-sold 'THC vapes'. After further incidents in schools and amongst school age children in the **Bury, Rochdale** and **Oldham** area the warning is being updated. The incidents have involved substances that were sold as either 'THC vape'/'THC vape pens'/'THC oil' or 'cannabis oil'. The reports usually indicate the substance was vaped in an electronic-cigarette device.

**Some of these incidents have led to pupils collapsing and to ambulances being called.**

A number of samples involved in these incidents have recently been tested and found to contain *synthetic cannabinoids*. These are the laboratory made chemicals found in 'Spice'. It is **extremely dangerous** for a young person with no tolerance to inhale **even a single dose** of a potent *synthetic cannabinoid*.



**Samples** containing a clear or coloured e-liquid which tests showed contained a synthetic cannabinoid ('Spice'). None of these samples contained THC or CBD.

*THC* is a chemical found in the cannabis plant and the main chemical responsible for the cannabis 'high'. When tested these samples did not contain THC, nor any other chemicals found in cannabis. These samples contained commercially produced flavoured *e-liquid* into which varying amounts of a *synthetic cannabinoid* had been added. Synthetic cannabinoids are the laboratory-made chemicals found in 'Spice'.

The liquids tested have varied in colour and the smell appears to be from the commercial e-liquid used. It is unknown how widespread the mis-selling of '*THC/Cannabis vape liquid*' containing a *synthetic cannabinoid* is. Tests conducted on samples sent into WEDINOS, the Welsh drug testing system, sold as '*Cannabis vape juice*' or '*THC Liquid*' have also contained a *synthetic cannabinoid*.

## Effects and risk

The risk of unknowingly vaping a *synthetic cannabinoid* ('Spice') is considerably greater than vaping *THC* or any other form of cannabis, particularly for young people with no experience or tolerance.

The effects can include **irregular heartbeat, confusion, paranoia, panic attack, insomnia, hallucinations and collapse.**

Even experienced users of 'Spice' have difficulty judging dosage and unintentionally administering a toxic dose is common. In some cases this poisoning may even be fatal. Last year there were 60 recorded deaths in England and Wales associated with *synthetic cannabinoids*.

The effect for a young person with no *tolerance* of inhaling even a single dose of a potent *synthetic cannabinoid* in an e-liquid mix, is highly likely to lead to negative physical and mental effects, particularly if they are expecting a cannabis like effect.

The incidents in Greater Manchester appear to be a case of mis-selling of one class B controlled drug for another.

The young people thought they were purchasing '*THC oil/THC vape*' but were being sold a cheaper and **more dangerous substance** ('Spice') that they would most likely not consider purchasing if they knew what it was.

## Emergency response and the recovery position

It is more risky for people to take drugs on their own rather than with friends because if anything goes wrong there's nobody to look after them. If somebody is unconscious and then vomits while lying on their back, they can swallow their vomit and literally drown in it. That is why an unconscious person should be put into the recovery position and an ambulance called.

### The Recovery Position

1. Put the hand closest to you by the head (as if they were waving)



2. Put the arm furthest away from you across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek



3. Hold the hand in place and lift up the knee furthest away from you, making sure the foot is planted firmly on the ground



4. Turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee

