


# Vaping and synthetic cannabinoids

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## What's in your vape?


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Vape oils and pens containing synthetic cannabinoids have led to people being hospitalised in Northern Ireland. Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that are designed to act like the active part of cannabis. 'Spice' is one of the most well-known ones.

Many of these oils and vape pens are being sold as 'THC' or cannabis oil. THC vapes are not sold legally in the UK, and there is little evidence of sale of vapes and liquids in the UK which actually contain THC. Tests have shown that many vapes sold as containing THC will actually contain a synthetic cannabinoid such as spice.

In countries where THC vapes are sold legally, they cost considerably more than nicotine vapes – so if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Whatever you are told about a vape or oil containing weed or THC, it is unlikely that it does, **and the effect will not be what you expected.**



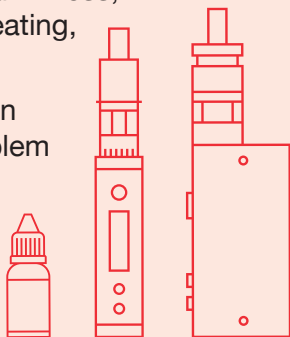


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Spice can be highly dangerous and is mostly used by people in prison and those who sleep rough. They use it because it robs them of hours of awareness of being locked up or cold and scared, not because it feels great. Drug users who aren't in prison or sleeping rough rarely use spice because they find the effects so unpleasant.

Spice can also cause serious side effects like breathing problems, heart attacks and seizures. Other side effects include dizziness, vomiting, heart-racing, sweating, anxiety and paranoia.

People who already have an existing mental health problem may find that synthetic cannabinoids such as spice can make these problems worse.




## Reducing your risk

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If you are buying illegal oils or vapes, even ones you think contain THC or cannabis oil in them, remember:


- The effects of vapes containing spice can take hold very quickly and you should not use one in the same way as a nicotine vape.
- When using a vape that you know contains spice, or that you have been told contains weed or THC, only inhale once to begin with and do it **gently**. Don't hold your breath and just breathe normally, not deeply. This will help you to assess the effects before using more.







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The only way to avoid all risks is to not take drugs which are not prescribed for you. However, if you choose to take them, follow our steps below to reduce the risks.

- Do not accept vapes from other people.
  - If using refillable vapes, always try to fill your own.
  - Try to obtain legitimate vape brands and liquids.
  - Do not use alone, make sure someone you trust is with you and knows what you are doing in case you need help.
  - Do not all use it at once – if someone gets into trouble, who can call for help?
  - Do not use in confined spaces like in cars, or under a duvet.
  - Do not startle anyone who is using, but try to be reassuring if they're distressed.
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- Do not film or share photos and videos of someone under the influence.
  - Do not play games to see how much you can take or take lots to show off.
  - Do not use along with alcohol or other drugs – the effects of mixing drugs can be very unpredictable and potentially dangerous.
  - Do not leave one of your friends with a stranger and watch out for their possessions while they're under the influence.
  - Look after your friends, especially if they seem dizzy or confused, are sweaty, trembling, vomiting, very anxious, aggressive or paranoid.
  - Call for help or an ambulance if you are worried about someone – you won't get into trouble, but you may save a friend's life.
  - If one of your friends is struggling to breathe or passes out, **call 999 immediately.**
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## Further information

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Scan the QR code for directories of specialist drug and alcohol support services in your local area.



[https://drugsandalcoholni.info/  
self-help-resources](https://drugsandalcoholni.info/self-help-resources)

Scan the QR code for the Talk to Frank website, for more information on drugs.



[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)



# Public Health Agency

## **Public Health Agency**

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