

Context

There have been several recent local incidents where young people have become unwell after intentionally vaping liquids that they believed contained THC (the psychoactive compound found in cannabis), but unknowingly contained a more **harmful synthetic drug** known as Spice.

We hope this guidance may help you feel informed when talking to a young person about the dangers of **Spice**.

What is Spice?

Spice is a popular name for **Synthetic Cannabinoids**: Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

These substances are not cannabis. They have been designed in a lab to mimic the desired effects of cannabis but are much stronger and produce more frequent negative side-effects that can require hospitalisation.

Spice can exacerbate mental health problems and anxiety. Regular use of Spice can lead to dependence (addiction) and withdrawal.

Vaping Products

Vaping products claiming to be cannabis / THC are controlled as Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Because they are illegal, there is no regulation, so it is impossible to know what they contain and what strengths they are. There is an increased risk of purchasing Spice.



These products can be brought online and through encrypted messaging apps (like Telegram). Vaping products are available in various forms, such as disposable vape devices or e-liquids that can be used with reusable vaping devices.

The best way to avoid any risk of harm is to **avoid using illicit vaping products**.

Please note: Consumer CBD (cannabidiol) products derived from cannabis are legal. These are sold for their potential to produce 'wellbeing' benefits, including reducing anxiety and relieving pain.

Overdose

Spice strength varies a lot, increasing the risk of overdose. In all drugs cases it is always advisable to treat the symptoms and not the drug, as people may not have taken the drug that they think they have. **If you suspect a Spice overdose, call an ambulance immediately.**

General Symptoms include:

- loss of consciousness
- breathing difficulties
- seizures
- high temperature (more than 38.5°C)
- severe chest pains
- vomiting

Spice overdoses have been known to cause Serotonin Syndrome, where symptoms can also include:

- twitching or jerking movements
- fully dilated pupils
- shivering

Top Tips for Speaking to Young People about Drugs

It is helpful to **be as factual as possible** so that the message is credible and **makes sense to the young person**. Presenting your concerns as coming from a place of wanting to care, and making sure the young person is well, provides the opportunity for good discussion. It is always **helpful to listen** to what the young person says, **so that they feel heard**. This can often reassure you.

It is important to remember that:

- Most young people do not vape.
- Young people in your care may not be interested in cannabis-based vape products.
- Most young people who have tried vaping have only used nicotine-based or flavoured nicotine-free vape products (it is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under 18).
- Only a small number of young people who do vape use cannabis / THC products.

For further information and harm reduction support for parents, carers or young people contact SDAS for free and confidential advice including:

- Family Support for parents and carers of young people using drugs and/or alcohol.
- Hidden Harm, the impact on children affected by other people's drugs and/or alcohol use.
- Support for individuals using drugs and/or alcohol who want to make changes.

For additional information we'd recommend you visit: Talk to Frank www.talktofrank.com