

LIVING WITH SPICE



A guide by and for people who use synthetic cannabinoids

EARLY MORNING...

**IT'S BEEN A BIT
SHIT LATELY**

**BUT
LOOKS LIKE A
NEW BATCH**

**USE A TEST DOSE,
A PINCH THE SIZE
OF A MATCH HEAD
IS ENOUGH!**

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE NEW AND EVEN OLD TIME SPICE USERS STILL MAKE... IS USING TOO MUCH.

Spice & Synthetic Cannabinoids

Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that are made in a lab in China. They are sent to the UK where a tiny amount is mixed with dried plants. **'Spice'** or **'Mamba'** are the nicknames for this mix of dried plants and synthetic cannabinoids.

THC is the natural chemical in cannabis that gets you high. Synthetic cannabinoids work on the same part of your brain as THC but they are far more toxic and up to 800 times more potent.

There are hundreds of different synthetic cannabinoids. Some have different effects. Some are more potent than others.

The strength of the Spice you smoke depends on which synthetic cannabinoid is used and how much of it is added to the Spice mix.

Prison Spice is often made by soaking synthetic cannabinoids into paper. This makes judging dosage even harder.

Overdose often happens when you use a new batch of Spice as it may have more synthetic cannabinoid added to the dried plants than the batch you've been using.

In 2018, a sharp rise in Spice overdoses came about when the amount of synthetic cannabinoid used in the Spice mix went from 1% up to 3%. This synthetic cannabinoid was called *5f-ADB*.

A new batch might also contain a new synthetic cannabinoid to which you have no tolerance. This makes overdose more likely. This new synthetic cannabinoid may also have different effects to the one you have been using.

The *'frozen zombie'* like behaviour seen among Spice users occurred when a new synthetic cannabinoid, called *FUB-AMB*, was added to the dried plants in the Spice mix.

Things you can do:

- Use a test dose the size of a match head with any new batch
- Remember, you can always take more, but you can never take less!



Using Spice with other drugs

Spice is highly toxic and can cause any number of serious problems on its own including seizures, convulsions (fits) and heart failure.

Last year a record 60 people died after using Spice. This was nearly always when they had taken other drugs as well as Spice.

Using Spice when you have used **alcohol** or other street drugs like **heroin**, **cocaine**, **blues** (*diazepam*) and **pregabalin** is more likely to lead to an overdose or risk heart failure.

Some users say drinking **alcohol** before using Spice is more likely to lead to an overdose than drinking after using Spice.

Use *naloxone* (the heroin antidote) if a heroin user overdoses after smoking Spice. Naloxone will not reverse the effects of Spice, but it will reverse the effect of heroin or any other opioids like **methadone** that are still in their body.

Although not everything is known, Spice may also react badly with any medications you are prescribed.

If you use Spice when you're prescribed **methadone** or some medicines used to treat mental illness, you may increase the risk of heart failure or *toxicity* (poisoning).

A mix of street drugs or **alcohol** and Spice is unpredictable and more likely to trigger a *psychotic episode* than using Spice on its own.

Long term heavy use of Spice may also decrease the effects of *antipsychotic* medication. However you should still **continue to take any antipsychotic medication** you are prescribed.

Despite any risks it is advised that if you are using Spice you should continue taking essential medicines, such as **insulin**, **warfarin** and any **anti-epileptic medication**.

Things you can do:

- **Try not to use Spice with other street drugs**
- **Talk to your doctor about Spice and medicines you are prescribed** (see inside back page)
- **Use naloxone if a heroin user overdoses after using Spice** (ask your drug service)



Dealing with a Spice Overdose

In the vast majority of cases people will not require emergency treatment. However, if in doubt **call an ambulance**.

Smoking Spice can be a confusing mind-fuck that feels like you've entered a different reality. This can cause paranoia and panic.

Calm and reassure people. Take them somewhere quite where they feel safe. Don't give them anything to eat and only let them drink water.

If they have severe chest pains, sit them down in a calm environment and reassure them. **Call an ambulance**.

If they have convulsions (fits). Make sure the area is safe and protect the head from injury. Do not hold people down because this can be very dangerous for them. **Call an ambulance**.

Try not to startle people on Spice as this could lead to a heart attack. If they can't be woken by gently shaking and calling them, put them on their side (*The recovery position*) so they don't choke on their vomit. **Call an ambulance**.



The recovery position

If someone is breathing abnormally, often with a strange gurgling sound, try lifting the chin up to help them breathe. Clear anything like vomit or false teeth out of the mouth.

If not breathing at all with blue colour skin, lips or fingernails (greyish, paler lips for darker complexions), then if you know how use CPR. **Call an ambulance** and stay with them until they come round or the ambulance arrives.

Things you can do:

- Learn what to do in an emergency. Ask any of the services for advice
- Treat people the same way you would want to be treated if you overdosed

ANOTHER DAY ON THE STREETS

**SARE ANY
CHANGE?**

**SOME FUCKER
TRIED TO ROB
ME TRAINERS
LAST NIGHT**

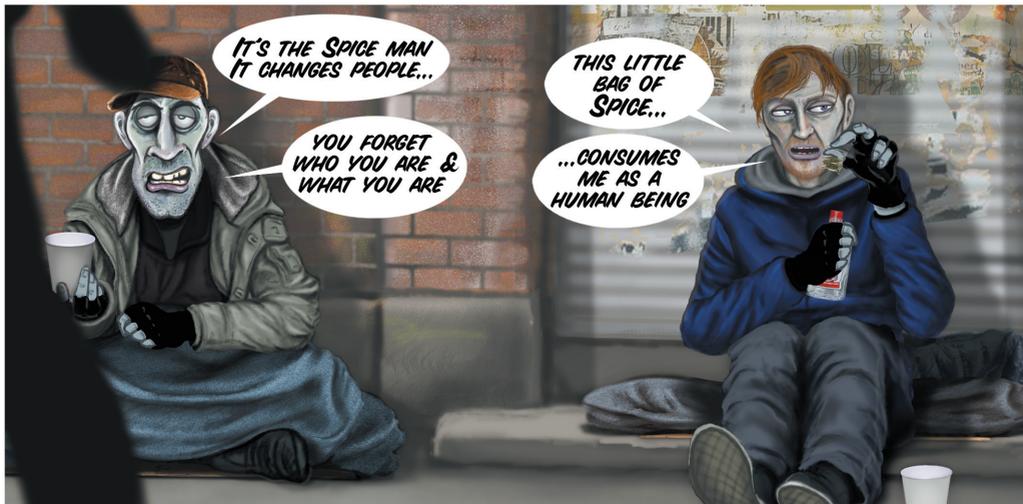


**IT'S THE SPICE MAN
IT CHANGES PEOPLE...**

**YOU FORGET
WHO YOU ARE &
WHAT YOU ARE**

**THIS LITTLE
BAG OF
SPICE...**

**...CONSUMES
ME AS A
HUMAN BEING**



Living with Spice

Spice is a relatively cheap but highly potent drug that is mainly used by people in prisons, hostels and among those sleeping rough.

Many people like the effects of Spice, at least at first. Some can take it or leave it, others use it to kill time in prison or to sleep on the street. Others use Spice to avoid boredom or the horror of facing the world straight.

Like other drugs, some people use Spice to cope with the reasons they ended up in prison or on the street in the first place. Most people probably use it for a mixture of reasons.

Tolerance to Spice develops rapidly as you find yourself needing more and more to get the same effect. With regular use the initial extreme effects (falling over, altered reality) become more like a mix of being stoned on strong Skunk weed and a heroin '*gouch*'.

Long term physical effects are largely unknown but include heart and kidney damage.

Spice severely effects short term memory. Some people report memory loss but it is unknown if this is just while they are intoxicated or if there are any lasting effects to memory or long term damage to the brain.

Long term use of Spice may cause anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and a worsening of any underlying psychiatric illness.

Spice is more likely than cannabis to induce a psychotic episode in those predisposed to the illness.

Your behaviour can change when you become a regular Spice user. You may not see it, but other people may notice you becoming moody, angry, unpredictable and aggressive.

Things you can do:

- **Ask out about alternative ways to help you deal with your feelings**



Spice dependence and withdrawal

Spice doesn't become a habit for everyone, but days spent smoking Spice can easily start to blur into one another.

You may start to find you can't sleep without Spice and wake in the night just to smoke more. Before you know it people are calling you a '*Spice head*'.

Some people seem to have few problems quitting Spice or use another drug when the Spice gets too much. But the cravings for Spice can be overwhelming and many find it really hard to stop.

Some long-term Spice users experience withdrawal symptoms when they try to quit.

Common Spice withdrawal symptoms usually last a week or so. They can include stomach cramps, insomnia, sleep disturbance and extreme sweating.

The severity of Spice withdrawal may be related to how much Spice you have been using and for how long you've been using it.

Severe withdrawal symptoms can seem similar to a Spice overdose, such as difficulty breathing, nausea, chest pains, uncontrolled shaking and seizures – which can lead to collapse or convulsions (fits).

Some people report mental disturbances that can continue for months after stopping, including: anxiety; impatience; difficulty concentrating; irritability; restlessness; depression and of course intense craving for Spice.

If you are trying to stop on your own, it's probably better to cut down as much as you can first, rather than stopping suddenly.

Better still, get some help and advice.

Things you can do:

- **Be honest with yourself about how much control you have over your Spice use**
- **Have the courage to ask for help when you need it**



Treatment and quitting Spice

Some people are reluctant to seek treatment as they think there's nothing available for Spice users.

Although there is no substitute drug for Spice like there is for heroin addiction, treatment services can prescribe drugs to help you detox and manage your Spice withdrawal.

This includes a short term dose of drugs like **diazepam** to help you sleep, drugs to manage stomach cramps, seizures or any other physical withdrawal symptoms you may experience.

Treatment services can also prescribe drugs during your withdrawal to manage anxiety, agitation, aggression, depression or psychotic symptoms for those with a history of psychotic illness.

Some people manage to quit Spice but find there is nothing to do when they stop, their minds go into overdrive, the cravings start and before they know it they're back in town and back on Spice.

Wanting to quit is one thing, but if you are still stuck in a scene surrounded by people using Spice your chances of staying off are slim. To quit Spice you need to get out of the Spice scene.

There are services that can help you do this. They can help you with any alcohol, drug or mental health issues you may have.

There are also services that can help you find accommodation and offer you the chance to do something worthwhile and enjoyable with your time.

Things you can do:

- **There are services that can help you**
- **Make the most of the help that is available**

MAKE THE MOST OF THE HELP THAT IS AVAILABLE

take a step
FORWARD
to change
your future

SEE THIS
LITTLE PLANT...

I GREW
THIS!



THE AWARD WINNING GARDEN AT THE BOOTH CENTRE MANCHESTER

Spice and prescribed medicines

Not everything is known about the interactions between Spice and prescribed medicines, but the table below shows some of the risks. **Speak to your doctor for advice.**

Antipsychotics & Spice

Such as: *Cariprazine, Amisulpride, Aripiprazol, Asenapine, Clozapine, Lurasidone hydrochloride, Olanzapine, Paliperidone, Quetiapine, Risperidone*

Risk: reduced breathing and heart rate, may feel sedated, confused, disorientated, and with muscle weakness. Risk of unconsciousness, and you may stop breathing. Risk of causing toxicity. Risk of heart failure.

Inhaling smoke from either cigarettes, Spice or cannabis may decrease the effectiveness of some antipsychotics.

Antidepressants & Spice

Such as: *Citalopram, Dapoxetine, Escitalopram, Fluoxetine, Fluvoxamine maleate, Paroxetine, Sertraline*

Risk: may increase or decrease effect of medication. May be of risk of *serotonin syndrome*, which can cause seizures and unconsciousness and can be fatal. Increased heart rate (*tachycardia*).

Anxiolytics & Hypnotics & Spice

Such as: *Nitrazepam, Clonazepam, Diazepam, Lorazepam, Oxazepam, Temazepam, Zolpidem, Zopiclone*

Risk: risk of confusion, sedation, can affect coordination, movement and being able to think clearly. Increase blood pressure and heart rate.

Increased risk of overdose if used with opioids.

Antimuscarinics & Spice

Such as: *Dicycloverine hydrochloride, Glycopyrronium bromide, Orphenadrine hydrochloride, Propantheline bromide*

Risk: cognitive impairment. Increased heart rate.

Gabapentinoids & Spice

Pregabalin and Gabapentin

Risk: increase of dizziness and drowsiness. Risk of confusion and disorientation, which can lead to unconsciousness.

Increased risk of overdose if used with opioids.

Mood Stabilisers & Spice

Such as: *Lithium, Valproate*

Risk: *Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome* can happen with Spice use, or withdrawal. This includes prolonged vomiting, that can reduce *Lithium levels* and put you at risk of mania.

Antifungals & Spice

Such as: *Itraconazole, Ketoconazole, Fluconazole*

Macrolide antibiotics & Spice

Such as: *Clarithromycin, Telithromycin, Erythromycin*

Anti-HIV drugs & Spice

Such as: *Indinavir, Nelfinavir, Ritonavir, Saquinavir*

Risk: may cause brain, kidney, liver or heart injury.

Help is available for Spice or any other drug or alcohol issue

- [>]** aims
To provide up to date information and advice on synthetic cannabinoids
- [>]** audience
People who use synthetic cannabinoids
- [v]** content
Some swearing and graphic images of drug use
- [£]** funding
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