

Mephedrone reclassified as Class B drug

Former “legal highs” mephedrone and other cathinones will be subject to criminal prosecution from 16th April 2010

These recreational drugs have now been reclassified as Class B under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which means that possession can attract a maximum five year prison sentence, while those found guilty of dealing and trafficking could face 14 years in prison.

Dear Colleague

You will be aware of recent media coverage of mephedrone which has caused considerable concern for both parents & teachers. To make clear the latest information on the drug and to reassure school staff on the powers they have under current legislation the following information should be distributed to all staff:

- Mephedrone (chemical name 4-methylmethcathinone, also known as MCAT, 4MMC, meow meow and bubbles) is a drug with similar effects to amphetamines (speed) and ecstasy. It typically comes in the form of a white powder and, it has now been reclassified as a Class B illegal drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Full details are set out in the mephedrone fact sheet (see overleaf), which also covers the effects and risks of taking the drug. School staff, pupils and parents can also access the latest information via the Talk to FRANK website (www.talktofrank.com) or helpline.

Some questions have been raised about whether teachers can confiscate such substances. As current guidance makes clear, schools **do** have the power to confiscate inappropriate items, including a substance they believe to be mephedrone (or any other drug **whatever its legal status**) in line with the school's behaviour policy. They **do not** have to return such confiscated substances. As *School discipline and pupil behaviour policies: Guidance for schools* makes clear, schools may choose not to return an item to the pupil, including:

- Items of value which the pupil should not have brought to school or has misused in some way might - if the school judges this appropriate and reasonable - be stored safely at the school until a responsible family adult can come and retrieve them.
- Items which the pupil should not have had in their possession - particularly of an unlawful or hazardous nature - may be given by the school to an external agency for disposal or further action as necessary. This should always be followed by a letter to the parents confirming that this has taken place and the reasons for such an action.

Any updated information and any changes of policy in the revised drugs guidance for schools, to be published this summer.

It should be absolutely clear that schools can deal effectively with mephedrone and other drugs (both legal and illegal) under existing guidance. **All schools should have a written drug policy setting out how they will deal with drug-related incidents**(contact jfletcher@cft.com for guidance) this should include an approach to working with the local police (particularly through Safer School Partnerships or the local Neighbourhood Policing Team) and Children's Services.

See below the links to the relevant guidance documents.

- Behaviour and attendance www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour
- School drug policies www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/drugs
- Safer School Partnerships www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/sspg

MEPHEDRONE FACT SHEET

Where does mephedrone come from?

Mephedrone belongs to a group of drugs known as cathinones which are stimulants similar to amphetamine compounds, but they can also have ecstasy-like effects. Cathinone itself is a naturally occurring stimulant found in the khat plant.

Cathinone derivatives are currently being sold online and in headshops (a shop specialising in drug paraphernalia). One of these is mephedrone.

What is mephedrone?

Mephedrone is a stimulant drug with effects similar to amphetamines (speed) and to ecstasy (MDMA) producing euphoria, alertness, talkativeness and feelings of empathy. It can also cause anxiety and paranoid states and risk over-stimulating the heart. It can also over-stimulate the nervous system which can lead to fits. Severe nosebleeds have been reported after snorting. It has also been linked to a small number of deaths.

A white or off-white powder, has been sold on the internet described as a plant food or a research chemical not for human consumption.

Reports say that it can be compulsive to use and can create a state of psychological dependence. Some people report an unpleasant come-down after using.

How is mephedrone consumed?

Mephedrone is usually snorted, but can be swallowed and may be used by other routes.

Key facts:

- It can contain a range of potentially dangerous chemicals and the actual chemical make up of the product can always change. This means there is no certainty over what has been brought or what the effects will be on the body.
- There is no data available on their impact on the body.

The Law

- The importation of mephedrone into the UK has been banned.
- Mephedrone became controlled as a Class B drug on the 16th April 2010 meaning it is illegal to have, give away or sell. Possession can get you up to five years in jail. Supplying someone else, including your friends, can get you up to 14 years in jail and an unlimited fine.

Risks:

- Anxiety and paranoid states
- Over-stimulation of the heart
- Over-stimulation of the nervous system that can cause fits
- Severe nosebleeds
- Reduced inhibitions or agitation
- Seizures (fit)
- Death

The risk is increased if combined with alcohol or other drugs.