

Mephedrone ('Meow Meow')

a.k.a Meph, Drone, Plant Food, MCAT, 4MMC, Bubble

Briefing dated 16th April 2010

What is mephedrone?

Mephedrone (a.k.a. 'Meow Meow') is a synthetic drug derived from cathinone, a stimulant found in the khat plant of eastern Africa, which is related to illicit amphetamines like Speed and Ecstasy.

Legal status

Although mephedrone was previously legal in the UK, **from Friday 16th April 2010 it became a Class B controlled substance, making it illegal to possess or supply.** Maximum penalties are 5 years in prison (and an unlimited fine) for possession and 14 years in prison (and an unlimited fine) for supply.

This change in the law also covers the related cathinone-derived substances methyldone ('MI' / bk-MDMA) and butylone (bk-MDBD).

Why has mephedrone been made illegal?

Due to fears about its safety, and accompanying concerns about its widespread use amongst young people, the government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) recommended that mephedrone be made illegal, and placed under the same category of control as amphetamines (i.e. Class B).

Police action

The police have said that they will primarily target dealers of mephedrone. However, anyone who is found in possession of mephedrone risks arrest and prosecution. Schools and colleges will always contact the police if they find **any** suspicious powder or capsule on site.

Background:

Appearance and use

Mephedrone usually comes as a white or off-white crystallised powder, although it can also come in capsule form. It is usually taken by swallowing or snorting. It was previously sold in 'head shops' or on the internet as a 'legal high' and falsely described as a 'plant food' (it has no known horticultural use).

Effects and risks

Users have reported similar effects to Ecstasy / MDMA, and/or amphetamines/cocaine (i.e. feeling of euphoria, decreased social inhibitions, increased energy and talkativeness). However, these effects appear to be short-acting, meaning users can get an urge to re-dose very quickly. Reported side effects include: anger or aggression, anxiety and panic attacks, increased heart rate and palpitations, fits, blackouts, lung complaints, blueness of lips and nose, sore or peeling nose / mouth, heavy and recurrent nose-bleeds, joint/spinal pain.

Mephedrone has been confirmed by a coroner as directly responsible for the death of a man in Hove. It has also been linked to several deaths in England, Scotland and Sweden (where it appears to have been one of several drugs used together, or had been used with alcohol).

The biggest danger is the drug's unknown qualities – this substance has never been medically tested on humans and consequently no-one knows its toxicity or what the long-term physical or mental effects could be.

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Harm reduction

Brighton and Hove City Council and Brighton and Hove City NHS do not condone or promote the use of mephedrone (or any illegal drug). However, if you do choose to take mephedrone you can reduce *some* of the risk of harm to yourself by following this advice:

- Avoid taking big amounts in one go - start with a small amount and wait for an hour or so before taking any more
- Set yourself limits of how much you will use - the more you take, the bigger the risk
- Don't use it with alcohol or with other drugs
- If you must snort it, use your own straw or nose and wash your nose out afterwards with clean water
- Stay hydrated by sipping water
- Take regular breaks from using / dancing so you don't overheat
- Don't use on your own - always tell your mates what you're taking and keep an eye on each other
- If anyone begins to feel unwell, take them to a cool, relaxed space and stay with them. If they get worse, feel dizzy or feel very hot but have dry skin, or a racing heart, get medical attention immediately
- Avoid using if you suffer from anxiety, have a mental illness or if you or a close family member have problems with their heart
- Always look after your immune system – make sure you eat properly and get enough sleep
- Avoid using late in the evening or at night if you have school / college / work the next morning
- Avoid spending money on it that you can't afford

Remember, no-one knows for sure what all the short or long term physical or mental effects of using this substance are. It has been made illegal because of concerns around its safety. Using this drug carries the additional risk of arrest and a criminal record.

The only way to remove all of the risks from mephedrone is by not taking it.

If someone who has recently taken mephedrone shows symptoms that give you cause for concern about their health, you should seek medical advice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT 'LEGAL HIGHS' VISIT www.talktofrank.com

If you have any concerns about someone who is using drugs and/or alcohol, contact:

Ru-ok? the young person's substance misuse service on **01273 293966**.

Open Access Adult Substance Misuse Service on **01273 607575**.

This briefing was first written by Ru-ok? in Sept 2009 and was updated in Nov 2009 and Jan, Feb, Mar and Apr 2010. It has been developed using information taken from the [Home Office](#), [FRANK](#), [Druglink](#), [Wikipedia](#) and anecdotal evidence from clients. The harm minimisation advice has been produced with reference to that found in [The Use of Mephedrone \(M-cat, Meow\) in Middlesbrough \(Newcombe Dr. R, 2009, Lifeline Publications\)](#) and [Meow - Mephedrone \(2010, HIT\)](#).