

WARNING

Synthetic cannabinoids ('Spice') vapes

There have been several recent incidents in a school in the **Oldham** area that have led to pupils collapsing after vaping a liquid. It is thought this liquid may have been sold as 'THC' or 'cannabis oil'.

Four samples involved in incidents were tested and found to contain a synthetic cannabinoid called *ADB-BUTINACA*. This is one of the laboratory made chemicals found in 'Spice'. It is **extremely dangerous** for a young person with no *tolerance* to inhale **even a single dose** of a potent *synthetic cannabinoid*.



Fig 1.



Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Fig 4.

All four samples contained commercially produced flavoured *e-liquid* into which a *synthetic cannabinoid* had been added. Synthetic cannabinoids are the laboratory-made chemicals found in 'Spice'. It is thought the blue liquid (fig1) in the bottle was the same substance added to the commercially available refillable nicotine vapes (fig 2 and fig 3). A further commercially available refillable nicotine vape contained a honey coloured e-liquid, to which the same synthetic cannabinoid had been added (fig 4).

Synthetic cannabinoid (Spice) is rarely used outside of adult populations in prisons and among homeless populations. Spice has a very negative image among young people. It is therefore likely that the substance was mis-sold as THC or cannabis vape oil. In the past few years a number of similar incidents have been reported in Greater Manchester.

Reports of students becoming unwell after vaping are common. However, this is normally thought a result of vaping too much nicotine. It is highly unlikely that non-refillable/disposable nicotine vapes or other commercially available nicotine vapes or other commercially available nicotine liquid has been spiked with 'Spice' (or THC), but is purchased/used in the belief it was a THC/ vape rather than a nicotine one.

Effects and risk: The risk of unknowingly vaping a *synthetic cannabinoid* ('Spice') is considerably greater than vaping *THC* or any other form of cannabis, particularly for young people with no experience or tolerance.

The effects can include **irregular heartbeat, confusion, paranoia, panic attack, insomnia, hallucinations and collapse.**

Even experienced users of 'Spice' have difficulty judging dosage and unintentionally administering a toxic dose is common. In some cases this poisoning may even be fatal. Last year there were 69 recorded deaths in England and Wales associated with *synthetic cannabinoids*.

The effect for a young person with no *tolerance* of inhaling even a single dose of a potent *synthetic cannabinoid* in an e-liquid mix, is highly likely to lead to negative physical and mental effects, particularly if they are expecting a cannabis like effect.

Incidents in Greater Manchester appear to have been a case of mis-selling one class B controlled drug for another.

The young people thought they were purchasing '*THC oil/THC vape*' but were being sold a cheaper and **more dangerous substance** ('Spice') that they would most likely not consider purchasing if they knew what it was.

Emergency response and the recovery position

It is more risky for people to take drugs on their own rather than with friends because if anything goes wrong there's nobody to look after them. If somebody is unconscious and then vomits while lying on their back, they can swallow their vomit and literally drown in it. That is why an unconscious person should be put into the recovery position and an ambulance called.

The Recovery Position

1. Put the hand closest to you by the head (as if they were waving)



2. Put the arm furthest away from you across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek



3. Hold the hand in place and lift up the knee furthest away from you, making sure the foot is planted firmly on the ground



4. Turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee



Please refer young people using these and other substances to **Early Break**
Info@earlybreak.co.uk or call 0161 723 3880.

The team will also provide individual or ongoing support and guidance to schools and professionals.
Adult services can be contacted at: **Turning point Oldham and Rochdale.** 0300 555 0234.