

WARNING

Synthetic cannabinoids ('Spice') mis-sold as 'THC vape'/'cannabis oil'/'THC vape pens'.

Since the start of the year there have been a dozen or so reports of incidents in schools and amongst school age children in **Bury, Rochdale** and **Oldham** involving substances that were sold as either 'THC vape'/'THC vape pens'/'THC oil' or 'cannabis oil'. The reports usually indicate the substance was vaped in an electronic-cigarette device.

Some of these incidents have led to pupils collapsing and to ambulances being called.

Samples involved in two of these incidents have been tested and found to contain *synthetic cannabinoids*. These are 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*.



Sample (a) contained a liquid in a standard 10ml e-liquid bottle.



Sample (b) was a liquid in a cartridge that fits into a small e-cigarette device known as a *vape pen*.

THC is a chemical found in the cannabis plant and the main chemical responsible for the cannabis 'high'. Neither samples tested contained *THC*, nor any other chemicals found in cannabis. Both samples contained commercially produced flavoured *e-liquid* into which a small amount of a *synthetic cannabinoid* had been added. Synthetic cannabinoids are the laboratory-made chemicals found in 'Spice'.

The liquids varied in colour and the smell appears to be from the commercial e-liquid used. It is unknown how wide-spread the mis-selling of '*THC/Cannabis vape liquid*' containing a *synthetic cannabinoid* is. Tests conducted on samples sent into the Welsh drug testing system sold as '*Cannabis vape juice*' or '*THC Liquid*' have also contained a *synthetic cannabinoid*. One of these samples came from the **Rochdale** area.

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 24 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.

The incidents in Greater Manchester appear to be a case of mis-selling of 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

