

RISKS OF USING SPICE

Figures from the Crown Prosecution Service show that there have been **504 offences relating to Spice and other NPS'** since a new law came into force in May 2016 that criminalised their production, sale and supply³.

1. CONSUMPTION

The largest known risk in regards to Spice use is that there is no controlled consistency in strength between one batch and the next.

A simple analogy of this would be buying two bottles of the same-named alcohol from the same seller and price- but not knowing that one is 18% volume while the next is over 90% volume.

The user would likely use both bottles of alcohol in the same manner and at the same rate, despite the difference in potency. By default the risks would hugely increase if they were to unknowingly consume the stronger one at the same rate as the weaker one.

An episode following the ingestion of a high dose is often referred to as a Spice Attack. Unfortunately there are an increasing number of reports of vulnerable prisoners (mental health issues/debt) being coerced into taking high doses of Spice in order to test the strength of batches and/or to display the symptoms of a Spice Attack for the amusement of others.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE

Evidence suggests that Spice use is far more prevalent in the prison estate than in the community. Furthermore it is suggested that use of the substance can become so addictive and destructive, that it often leads to a complete loss of motivation to maintain things such as personal hygiene and achieving goals.

Therefore as a practitioner, it can be extremely difficult to work with and motivate an individual actively using Spice, as often their focus will not be on effectively addressing their identified needs.

3. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Last year for the fourth year running, it was identified that the risk of seeking Emergency Medical Treatment was "higher following the use of synthetic cannabinoid products than any other substance"⁴. Furthermore, whilst any form of substance misuse carries a certain level of risk, the unpredictability of Spice strength and the symptoms it causes from one individual to the next can leave medical staff struggling to identify the best possible treatment.