

Dear Colleague

MEPHEDRONE

The purpose of this alert is to offer advice on handling users of mephedrone who may present to services for help, particularly given the extensive media coverage of the possible health risks of this drug and its classification as a Class B substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act on 16 April 2010.

Mephedrone is a cathinone. These types of drugs are stimulants with effects similar to amphetamine and to Ecstasy. Current knowledge of the side-effects are based on recent self-reports and clinical observations, and scientific understanding of the known effects of cathinones. Mephedrone users face the risks of both amphetamine-type drugs and Ecstasy-type drugs. These include overstimulation of the cardiovascular system, with risk of heart and circulatory problems; and overstimulation of the nervous system, with risk of fits and of agitated and paranoid states and hallucinations.

The following presentations represent the instances when people are most likely to benefit from clinical attention:

- Acute toxic effects should be managed symptomatically and may need referral to A&E.
- Less severe or less acute physical or psychological problems should be assessed and managed symptomatically as for any other users of psychoactive drugs.
 - Some may attend after recent mephedrone use with a temporary 'comedown' with low mood, requiring appropriate reassurance, support and monitoring
 - Those who have started to show signs of dependence from more regular use may need referral for specialist assessment.
 - Others may present with physical or psychological symptoms that they believe might be linked to their drug use, in which case, appropriate diagnostic assessments are needed as per normal clinical practice.

**From the Chief Medical
Officer**
Dr Harry Burns MPH
FRCS(Glas) FRCP(Ed)
FFPH

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Addresses

For action

- Medical Directors for circulation to all staff in A&E Depts.
- All General Practitioners including Practice Nurses, non-principals and Out of Hours services
- NHS 24
- Scottish Ambulance Service
- Scottish Drugs Forum for cascade to services for drug users

For Information

Chief Executives, NHS
Boards

Further Enquiries

Mr Gary Bannon (policy)
Gary.bannon@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
0131 244 5082

For up to date information, professionals and public can go to www.knowthescore.info or call the helpline on 0800 587 5879.

Yours sincerely,

DR HARRY BURNS