



HSE Drug Trend Risk Communication

Cannabis edible jellies adulterated with synthetic cannabinoids

The HSE is currently concerned about the public health risks associated with synthetic cannabinoids appearing in jellies and sweets sold as Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) edibles in Ireland.

Today 6th January 2023, the HSE National Social Inclusion Office has issued a risk communication on the emergence of synthetic cannabinoids appearing in cannabis and THC products. A small number of hospitalisations have occurred following the consumption of edible products (Jolly Rancher jellies) during the period of December 2022 in the Tipperary Region. Upon analysis from Forensic Science Ireland, these edible products have been found to contain new and risky substances known as synthetic cannabinoids.

Synthetic cannabinoids are man-made chemicals produced to mimic the effects of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive compound in cannabis. Often, products do not contain THC but instead they can contain a synthetic cannabinoid which will produce similar, more potent effects. They will greatly increase the risks of a drug emergency occurring because they produce more intense adverse effects. Their use has caused many serious poisonings, mass poisonings and deaths internationally in recent years.

There has been increased concern in Ireland and throughout Europe regarding the emergence of synthetic cannabinoids contained within products sold as cannabis or THC edibles and a number of warnings have been issued throughout Europe to raise awareness among the general public, including warnings from the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. The HSE have previously expressed concern in relation to the risk of synthetic cannabinoids appearing in herbal (plant material),vape liquid/oil, edible and other THC products in Ireland through their website [Drugs.ie](https://www.drugs.ie).

It is anticipated that counterfeit edible products available on the market are made in clandestine laboratories and the potency and contents of products cannot be guaranteed. A number of these products seized recently have been analysed by Forensic Science Ireland and have been found to contain only new and extra risky synthetic cannabinoids and not in fact any THC as indicated on the packaging.

Synthetic cannabinoid exposure: signs of concern

- Feeling dizzy, confusion, abnormal sweating, respiratory issues (difficulty breathing or lack of breathing), chest pain/rapid heartbeat, nausea and vomiting, agitation, aggression, psychotic behaviour, hallucinations, delusions, seizures or fits.
- They can also lead to sudden loss of consciousness.

It is safer not to use drugs at all and all use has risks. The HSE advise the public that there is a high level of risk associated with THC edibles currently being sold illegally in Ireland, as on occasion they do not contain THC but instead contain a synthetic cannabinoid.

For people who use cannabis, we remind them of the current risk of synthetic cannabinoid exposure and encourage people not to be afraid or hesitate to get medical help if someone has an unexpected reaction or becomes physically or mentally unwell following use.

Cannabis jellies found to contain synthetic cannabinoids in Ireland



Image source: Forensic Science Ireland, 2023

Please note: These images do not guarantee the contents of similar packaged products or the safety of other products not included in this communication.

More information

- Drugs.ie [‘About synthetic cannabinoids’](#)
- Drugs.ie [‘HSE update on synthetic cannabinoids in 2022’](#)
- Drugs.ie Cannabis edible [factsheet for concerned parents](#)
- Drugs.ie [Cannabis edible factsheet for people who use](#)

References

- [European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2021. Synthetic cannabinoids in Europe – a review, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.](#)
- Public Health Agency Northern Ireland 2021 [‘Spice vaping warning issued’](#)
- Tullverket Swedish Customs Communication 2021 ‘Warning for dangerous cannabis candy’
- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021. Adulteration of cannabis products with synthetic cannabinoids](#)
- Yale School of Medicine 2018 [‘Treating drug-poisoned residents on the New Haven Green’](#)