

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS  
**ILLICIT PILLS &**



NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

**SYNTHETIC DRUGS**

**"THEY CALL IT 'NEW.' YOU'LL CALL IT REGRET."**



# Message from the Director

This booklet tells the truth, with no filters and no excuses. Today's pills and so-called "party drugs" are among the most dangerous threats facing young people. They are packaged to look fun, safe, and harmless, but in reality, most are counterfeits laced with toxic chemicals and deadly synthetics like fentanyl. The truth is sobering and straightforward! One pill can end your life. Behind every headline lies a devastated family, an empty classroom seat, and a community mourning the loss of potential that will never return.

Here in Guyana, the Customs Anti Narcotic Unit (CANU), in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Guyana Police Force, Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory and many other stakeholders, is at the frontline of the fight against these emerging dangers. Through our National Early Warning System (EWS), we monitor, test, and analyse new substances before they spread across our communities. The information we gather is used to alert hospitals, schools, enforcement agencies, and the public. Saving lives through timely action and coordination. But enforcement alone is not enough. The most powerful defence against drugs will always be an informed and empowered citizen, especially our youth.

True confidence does not come from a capsule or a powder. It comes from discipline, courage, and control. It is the strength to walk away when something feels wrong, and the wisdom to protect yourself and your friends. Drugs do not make you fearless, they destroy your focus, memory, and peace. If you ever feel pressured, remember



this truth! most young people choose to stay clean. You have every right to say no. You have every right to walk away. You have every right to choose life.

If you've experimented before, understand this, it is not too late to take back control. Reach out for help early. Speak to a parent, teacher, counsellor, or faith leader. Asking for help is not a weakness... it is a strength. And if a friend shows signs of overdose or distress, act immediately. Call 911 for help. Don't wait. Every second matters.

As a national authority, CANU's mission is clear:

***To educate - providing honest, practical, and accessible information about the realities of drug use.***

***To protect - through enforcement, intelligence, and the rapid sharing of alerts and warnings.***

***To empower - by giving every young person the knowledge, confidence, and tools to make informed decisions.***

Your strength is not measured by what you take, it is defined by what you refuse to take. Protect your mind. Guard your future. Walk away from anything that threatens your peace, your health, or your dreams.

Guyana needs you, your ideas, your discipline, your courage, your leadership. Together, we can build a generation that is alert, aware, and alive.

***Stay alert. Stay aware. Stay alive.***



Mr. James Singh

Director,

Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU)

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# What's Really Going On

The Truth About NPS -  
“New Drugs, Old  
Dangers”

What Are NPS  
New Psychoactive  
Substances (NPS),  
sometimes called  
“designer drugs,”  
**“synthetic drugs,”** or  
“legal highs,” are  
man-made  
chemicals  
designed to mimic  
drugs like cocaine,  
ecstasy, or cannabis.



People who produce or sell them often mix unknown ingredients in labs and then market them as something “safe” or “legal.” But here’s the truth: they’re not safe, and they’re not truly legal anymore. Some of these substances are created by slightly modifying the chemical structure of existing illegal drugs, making them difficult to identify and easy to sell online or in clubs. They can appear as pills, powders, liquids, or herbal mixes, but what’s inside is often unpredictable and dangerous.

## What Are Synthetic Drugs

Synthetic drugs are man-made chemicals, not plants. They are created in labs to copy the effects of drugs like marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, or prescription pills. But they are not the same. Synthetic drugs hit the brain faster, harder, and more unpredictably, making them far more dangerous than many people realise.

One of the biggest risks is that you never know what you’re taking. Two pills or vapes with the same name can contain completely different chemicals. There is no quality

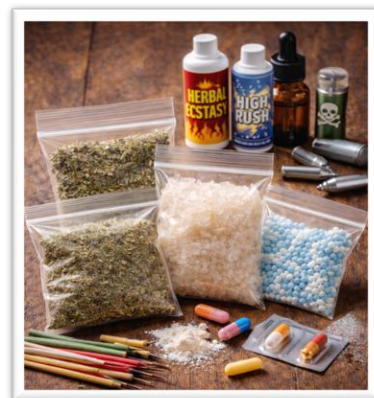
control, no safe dose, and no warning label that tells you how your body will react. Even using once can lead to seizures, extreme panic, psychosis, heart problems, or overdose. Synthetic drugs are especially dangerous for teens because the brain is still developing. Until about age 25, the parts of your brain that control decision-making, emotions, and stress are still under construction. Synthetic chemicals can disrupt this process, affecting memory, mood, and self-control. In some cases, these changes can last long after the drug is gone. Many synthetic drugs are sold in forms that look familiar and harmless. Fake weed like Spice or K2 can cause hallucinations, aggression, and seizures. Fake party drugs and pressed pills are often made to look like ecstasy, Xanax, or Percocet, but may contain fentanyl, a powerful opioid that can be deadly in tiny amounts. Synthetic vapes and edibles are often marketed as “legal” or “safe,” but they can still seriously damage the brain and lungs. Some Synthetic Drugs are classified as NPS,

### Why They’re a Big Problem

NPS are dangerous because they’re always changing. Each time one chemical gets banned, another new version shows up with a different name and an even riskier mix. Doctors, scientists, and police struggle to keep up because these substances are made in secret and are usually tested on no one before being sold. That means nobody really knows how strong they are, what they’ll do to your body, or what could happen if you mix them with alcohol or other drugs. Some can cause fast heartbeats, panic attacks, hallucinations, paranoia, seizures, strokes, or even death. Since every type and batch can act differently, there’s no way to know what’s really in them or how your body will react every time you use one, you’re taking a serious risk.

### What “Legal Highs” Really Means

The term “legal high” was once used to make these drugs sound safe or harmless, but that idea is completely misleading. Many countries, including Guyana and the United Kingdom, have now banned hundreds of these substances because of the serious harm they cause. Even when they were technically legal, people still ended up in hospitals, some never woke up, and many suffered long-lasting mental health problems. Just because something is legal doesn’t



mean it's safe... after all, rat poison and bleach are legal, too, but no one would ever think of consuming them.

## What “Herbal Highs” Really Means

Herbal highs refer to drugs marketed as “natural” or “plant-based” alternatives to drugs like cannabis or ecstasy, but this is misleading. Many contain synthetic chemicals, not just herbs, and come as dried leaves, powders, capsules, teas, oils, or incense with flashy labels that hide ingredients.



## How Fast NPS Spread

At one point, new NPS are being discovered at an alarming rate of almost one new drug every week. By 2018, the United Nations had already identified nearly 900 different types of these substances. Many of them are fake versions of well-known drugs, such as stimulants like amphetamines, hallucinogens like LSD, synthetic cannabinoids that mimic marijuana, and depressants designed to act like sleeping pills or opioids. In recent years, even stronger and more dangerous synthetic opioids, similar to fentanyl, have begun to appear more frequently, making NPS use even deadlier and more unpredictable.



## Who Uses Them

Most people don't use NPS, but when they do, it's often younger individuals who believe they're trying something “new” or “legal.” Studies from Europe show that less than one percent of adults use NPS regularly, though usage is higher among young adults aged 16 to 24. The most common forms include pills, herbal smoking mixes, and gases such as nitrous oxide, often called “laughing gas.” While it might sound

harmless, laughing gas can actually cause nerve damage, unconsciousness, and in some cases, even death.

## Why NPS Are So Risky

Each pill or powder sold as NPS can contain a completely different chemical mix, often with dangerous additives or toxins, and sometimes even drugs that react badly with alcohol or medication. The effects can appear quickly and last for hours, or even days, making them extremely unpredictable. A person might feel fine one moment and collapse the next. Because no two batches are ever the same, one dose might seem harmless while the next could be deadly — making every use a gamble with your life.

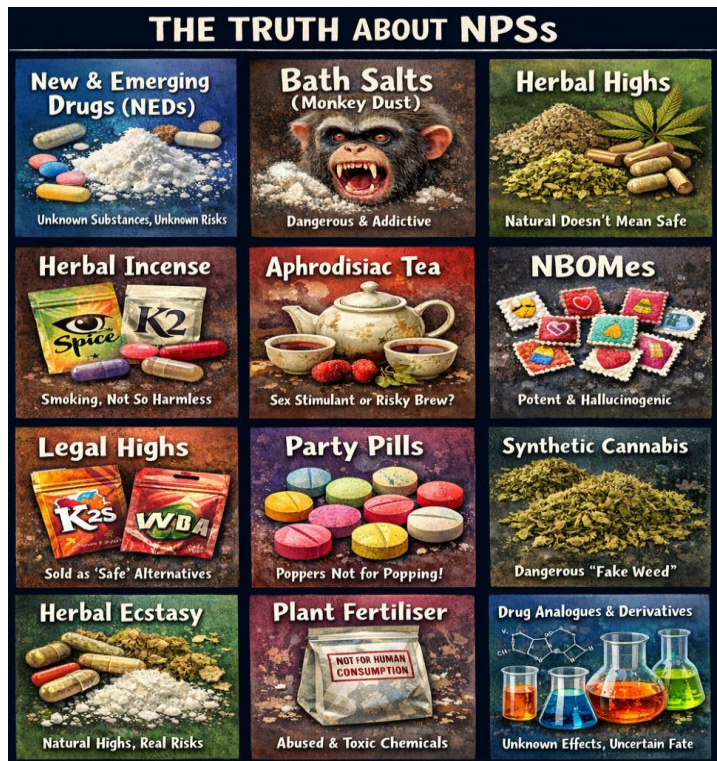
## How the World Is Fighting Back

Countries around the world are developing Early Warning Systems (EWS) to detect and report new NPS before they spread. Laboratories test seized pills and powders to identify what they contain, while health systems issue alerts whenever a dangerous substance is discovered. These systems play a key role in protecting the public and helping authorities respond quickly, but the drug market changes so fast that it's almost impossible to keep up. That's why the safest and smartest choice is to stay away from NPS altogether.



**NPS** might seem like

the latest trend, but they carry the same old, deadly risks as traditional drugs. They're unpredictable, addictive, and often made by people who care more about making money than saving lives. Every pill, puff, or hit is a gamble, you never know what's really inside or how it will affect you. Don't be the test subject. *Stay smart, stay safe, and remember: your mind and your future are not worth the experiment.*



# The Science Behind the Hype



Your brain is like the control room for your entire body. It manages everything, your thoughts, feelings, memory, focus, and the way you experience pleasure.

When you eat your favourite food, score a goal, or laugh with friends, your brain naturally releases “feel-good” chemicals like dopamine and serotonin. These are your brain’s rewards for doing something positive or exciting.

But drugs hijack like ecstasy, cathinones, and

here’s the problem, NPS that system. Substances methamphetamine, fentanyl don’t just nudge your

brain’s reward centre... they flood it. Imagine turning the volume knob all the way up until the speakers break; that’s what these drugs do inside your brain. They create an intense rush of pleasure, confidence, and energy that feels powerful at first... but it’s fake and dangerously short-lived.

Once that “high” fades, your brain is left drained and confused. It stops making normal levels of those feel-good chemicals on its own because it’s been overloaded. That’s when users start feeling tired, sad, anxious, or empty, and they crave more to feel normal again. This is how addiction starts... your brain begins to depend on the drug to work properly.

Over time, that same chemical storm can cause real damage. The brain's structure changes, especially in the areas that control memory, learning, judgment, and emotion. People who keep using NPS often struggle to concentrate, make good decisions, or manage their moods. Things that once felt fun or rewarding, like sports, music, or friendships, start to feel dull.

Drugs like fentanyl, even in tiny doses, can slow your breathing so much that it stops completely. Meth and cathinones overstimulate the body, leading to exhaustion, panic attacks, and long-term mental health issues like paranoia and depression. Ecstasy can overheat your body and damage brain cells that control memory and emotion, creating harm that might never fully heal.

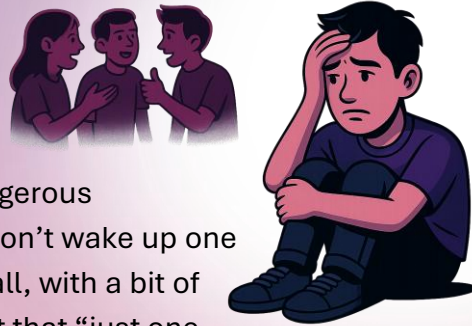


Every time someone takes an NPS, they're essentially running an experiment on their brain, and there's no undo button. What feels "fun" for a few minutes can destroy years of learning, memory, and focus. The truth is that your brain is one of a kind. Once it's damaged, you don't get a replacement.

So, the next time someone says, "Just one pill won't hurt," just remember, your brain doesn't forget chemical damage. Protect your control room, because once you lose it, you lose everything that makes you who you are.

# Why Teens Get Trapped

Everyone wants to fit in, feel confident, and escape stress sometimes, and that's a normal thing. But those same feelings can also make teens the easiest targets for dangerous drugs like NPS. The truth is that most people don't wake up one day deciding to use drugs. It usually starts small, with a bit of curiosity, a moment of pressure, or the thought that "just one time" can't hurt. But that's how the trap begins.



## Curiosity Can Turn Risky

Curiosity is a natural part of growing up. You want to know how things feel, test limits, and find out who you are. But when that curiosity turns toward drugs, it can quickly backfire. NPS and other substances mess with your brain's reward system, giving you a fake rush that makes you want to feel it again. It's like pressing a "pleasure button" that breaks the control panel. After that, your brain starts craving that feeling even when you don't want it to. What began as curiosity becomes a habit, and habits can turn into addiction before you even realise it.

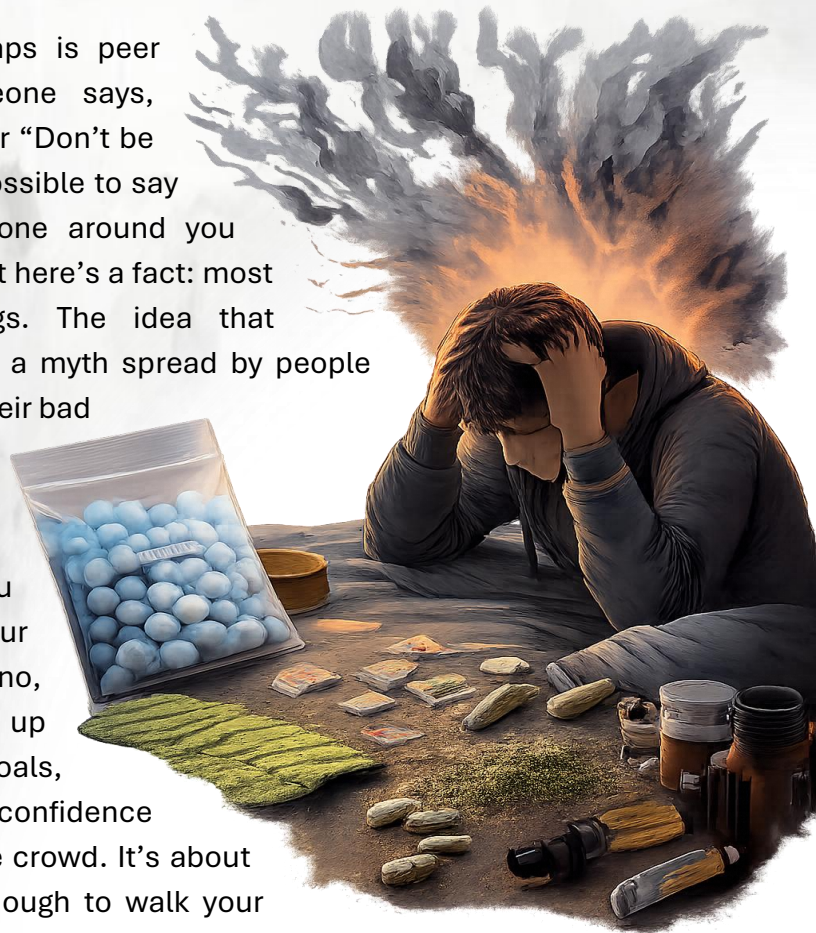


## Stress and Escape

Life can get stressful at times, dealing with exams, family problems, heartbreaks, or trying to live up to expectations. Some people turn to drugs, thinking it'll help them relax or forget their troubles for a while. But what they don't realise is that drugs don't erase stress, they delay and multiply it. Once the high fades, everything you were running from is still there, plus the added problem of feeling worse than before.

## The Pressure to Fit In

One of the biggest traps is peer pressure. When someone says, "Come on, just try it," or "Don't be boring." It can feel impossible to say no, especially if everyone around you seems to be doing it. But here's a fact: most teens don't use drugs. The idea that "everyone's doing it" is a myth spread by people who want company in their bad decisions. Choosing to stay sober doesn't make you weak or uncool. It shows that you have control over your choices. When you say no, you're actually standing up for your health, your goals, and your future. Real confidence isn't about following the crowd. It's about being the one brave enough to walk your own path.



## The Illusion of Confidence

Drugs can make people feel confident for a moment. They feel like they're fearless, funny, or unstoppable. But that's not real confidence, it's chemical confidence. The second the drug wears off, the anxiety, doubt, and pain come crashing back, most often worse than before. True confidence comes from knowing yourself, not from what you put into your body.

When you build your confidence through real experiences, working hard, learning new skills, helping others, or just being honest with yourself, no one can take that away from you. But when you depend on a drug to feel good, you give that power away to something that can destroy you.



Drugs promise excitement, courage, or peace, but they deliver confusion, damage, and control. They don't make you free... they own you. They change how your brain thinks, how your body reacts, and how you see yourself.

***If you ever feel pressured, remind yourself: your future is bigger than a moment of curiosity. You don't need to prove yourself to anyone. Saying no doesn't make you different... it makes you stronger, smarter, and in control. The real power isn't in trying a pill, it's in knowing you don't need one to be confident, creative, or calm.***

# Do you really know what's inside those Pills

## The Real Story

When people buy a pill at a party or off the street, what's stamped on it doesn't mean anything about what's inside. A tablet that looks like ecstasy, for example, might be one or more of a whole list of chemicals, and sometimes things you'd never expect. No one selling it is doing lab checks for your safety. That means each pill is a mystery.



Common ingredients you might find  
(and why they're dangerous)

***Cathinones:*** These are synthetic stimulants (often sold as “bath salts” or fake ecstasy). They speed up your heart and brain. Too much can cause panic, seizures, high body temperature, and heart failure.

***Methamphetamine:*** A very strong stimulant that burns you out fast. It can cause violent panic, paranoia, heart problems, and long-term brain damage.

***Synthetic opioids*** (like fentanyl-type drugs): Extremely powerful painkillers. Even a tiny amount can stop breathing. If fentanyl gets mixed into a pill, people can die from what looks like a single “normal” tablet.

## *Caffeine and other legal*

***stimulants:*** These are added to make pills feel stronger or longer lasting. In large mixes, they worsen heart and anxiety effects.

## *Cutting agents & contaminants:*

Stuff like sugars, talc, or worse: cleaning chemicals, industrial solvents, or heavy metals. These can burn organs, cause poisoning, or create unexpected interactions.

## *Multiple drugs in one tablet:*

Tests have found several different drugs inside a single pill. Which often includes stimulants, opioids and other synthetics, usually creating deadly combinations.

Why is this a huge problem

***NO CONSISTENCY*** Two pills from the same pack can be totally different. One might be “mild,” the next could be lethal.

***MIXING RISKS*** If a pill contains both a stimulant and an opioid, your body gets opposite signals (either speed up or slow down). That makes the effects chaotic and increases the chance of overdose.

***LITTLE TO NO TESTING*** Street drugs aren't quality-controlled. They're made by people who want profit, not safety.

# ***STRONGER THAN YOU EXPECT*** New synthetic variations can be hundreds of times stronger than the drug they're copying.

What happens in your body, “The simple science”

When you swallow a pill, those chemicals enter your bloodstream and hit your brain. Some drugs flood the parts of your brain that control pleasure, judgment, and body systems like breathing and heart rate. That short rush of feeling “amazing” comes with costs:

***your heart can race so hard it fails***

***your body temperature can spike and organs can shut down***

***your breathing can slow or stop (especially with opioids)***

***your brain's memory and mood centers can be damaged long-term***

Signs a pill is causing serious harm (overdose warning signs)

Look for:

***Very slow, weak, or no breathing***

***Blue lips or fingers, or clumsy/unconscious behaviour***

***Seizures, vomiting, or chest pain***

***Extreme confusion, paranoia, or hallucinations***

***High body temperature, passing out, or not waking up***

***If you see any of these, treat it like an emergency.***

Pills aren't a gamble you can't win

A pill from the street is a chemical surprise. It might contain stimulants, opioids, dangerous additives, or a deadly mix of everything. Because batches vary and new, stronger synthetics keep appearing, one pill can end a life. No one should be a test subject.

# The Aftermath

When the rush fades, reality hits, and it's never pretty. Drugs like NPS might promise excitement or escape, but they leave behind damage that doesn't disappear when the night ends. Every pill, puff, or hit comes with a cost, and those costs build up faster than most people realise. The truth is, the aftermath starts the very first time you use, setting off changes in your body and mind that can last far beyond the high.

## Memory and Focus: Your Mind Slows Down

NPS interferes with the part of



your brain that controls learning, attention, and memory. After using them, many people struggle to remember conversations, forget simple things, or find it hard to focus at school or work. These drugs overload and eventually burn out your brain's "reward and learning" systems, which are the same areas that help you study, make decisions, and stay sharp. Over time, this damage makes it harder to concentrate, think clearly, or control your emotions and reactions. It's like trying to drive with fogged-up windows, and your brain can no longer see things clearly or function the way it should.

## Mental Health: Panic, Paranoia, and the Fear That Doesn't Go Away

The “high” from NPS might last only minutes or hours, but the mental fallout can stretch on for days, months, or even years. These substances interfere with the way your brain handles stress and fear, leading to sudden panic attacks, intense anxiety, and paranoia that can make you feel like everyone’s watching you or that you can’t breathe. Some users experience terrifying hallucinations, which include seeing or hearing things that aren’t real, followed by deep depression and uncontrollable mood swings. For many, the fear and unease don’t stop even after they quit using it. That’s because NPS can permanently alter the brain’s chemistry, leaving people feeling unsafe, restless, or emotionally disconnected long after the drug is gone. This isn’t just a “bad trip”... it’s lasting brain damage.

## Addiction: The Trap That Feels Impossible to Escape

Addiction is a trap that can feel impossible to escape. What often begins as a “once-in-a-while” experiment quickly turns into something your body demands. Because NPS flood the brain with pleasure chemicals like dopamine, your brain eventually stops producing them naturally. Soon, you can’t feel normal without using, even if you believe you can stop at any time, your brain disagrees. The cycle usually starts with curiosity (“I’ll just try it once”), turns into dependence (“I need it to feel okay”), and ends with loss of control (“I can’t stop”). With every use, your body builds tolerance, meaning you need more to feel the same effect, and that’s when the danger skyrockets. Addiction doesn’t just damage your health, it breaks trust, weakens relationships, and steals the dreams you’ve worked hard for.

## Physical Consequences: The Body Can’t Keep Up

NPS can cause severe and lasting damage to your organs and nervous system. Because they’re made with random and often toxic chemicals, no one can predict how your body will react. Over time, these substances can lead to heart damage, high blood pressure, liver and kidney failure, and nerve damage that causes shaking or numbness. They can also make your body overheat, a condition called hyperthermia, which can cause your organs to shut down. In the most extreme cases, NPS use can be deadly. Even a single pill can trigger a fatal reaction, especially if it contains powerful synthetic opioids like fentanyl or is mixed with alcohol.

## The Emotional Fallout

What hurts the most about using NPS often isn't the physical damage, it's everything you lose along the way. People who start using these drugs usually begin to drift away from friends, skip school, or stop doing the things they once loved. Their moods become unpredictable, and relationships that once mattered start to fall apart. The excitement and escape they were chasing slowly turn into isolation, emptiness, and regret. For many young people, the hardest part isn't quitting the drug, it's trying to rebuild the trust, peace of mind, and self-confidence that were lost along the way.

## The Final Cost

Every year, countless young people around the world, including right here in the Caribbean, lose their lives to synthetic and fake drugs. The saddest part is that most of them never intended for things to go that far. Many thought they were having fun, trying something new, or taking harmless risks. But it only takes one pill with the wrong chemical mix, one moment of overconfidence, or one "bad batch" to end a life. And once that happens, there's no way to undo it.

## The Real Message

Pills don't build you up, they break you down. They steal your focus, drain your confidence, and take away your future piece by piece. You don't need a pill to prove you're brave, strong, or cool. Real strength is walking away. Real power is staying in control.

# NPS: How They Work, and Why They're Risky

Quick context: NPS (New Psychoactive Substances) are “lab-made” drugs designed to copy the effects of known drugs (like cannabis, MDMA, ketamine, opioids), often with brand-new chemicals. Because they're new and constantly changing, there's limited info on short- and long-term effects, but enough red flags to take them seriously. By Dec 2021, 134 countries/territories had reported 1,124 NPS to the UN. That number keeps shifting because the market never sits still.

Big Picture Risks (for any NPS)

***Unpredictable mix: What's in the packet today might be different tomorrow, even with the same logo.***

***Dose unknown: A “normal” amount could hit like 5–10 times the strength you expected.***

***Stronger than the originals: Many synthetics bind harder to brain receptors, so side effects can be heavier.***

***Polydrug danger: Mixing alcohol or other meds (even anxiety pills) multiplies the risk.***

***Long-term fallout: Memory issues, mood problems, addiction, and organ damage.***

# The Most Popular Types of NPS



*Synthetic Cannabinoids (often sold as “spice,” “K2,” “herbal incense”)*

What they are: Lab chemicals sprayed onto dried herbs to imitate THC (the active ingredient in cannabis).

How they look: Colourful foils/packets; “herbal blends”; sometimes vapes or liquids.

Why they’re risky: Many don’t act like THC at all; they overstimulate the same receptors and can be far stronger.

*The effects can shift suddenly; one moment, you might feel calm, and the next, you could experience panic or even black out.*

Short-term effects: Fast heart rate, agitation, confusion, vomiting, hallucinations, seizures.

Long-term: Anxiety/depression spikes, memory problems, potential psychosis, withdrawal.

Bottom line: “Fake weed” is not safe. It’s usually more intense and less predictable than cannabis.



## ***Fentanyl***

**What it is:** A synthetic opioid originally made for medical pain relief, but now widely produced illegally. On the street, it's often mixed into other drugs without people knowing, such as cocaine, ecstasy, fake pills, and even cannabis products.

**How it looks:** Powder, tiny grains, pills made to look like prescription meds (often blue "M30" pills), patches, or mixed invisibly into other drugs.

**Why is it risky:** Fentanyl is extremely powerful. About 50 times stronger than heroin and ***100 times stronger than morphine***. A dose the size of a few grains of salt can be fatal. There's no room for guessing.

***The danger isn't just addiction. it's that one use can kill, especially if someone doesn't know it's there.***

**Short-term effects:** Extreme drowsiness, slowed breathing, nausea, confusion, loss of consciousness, overdose, death.

**Long-term effects:** Severe addiction, dependence, brain oxygen damage from overdoses, withdrawal that's intense and dangerous, and a higher risk of repeated overdose.

**Bottom line:** Fentanyl doesn't give second chances. It's silent, fast, and deadly, especially when hidden in other drugs. If you didn't test it, you don't know it. And not knowing can cost your life.



### ***Ecstasy (MDMA / “Molly”)***

**What it is:** A synthetic stimulant and hallucinogen that affects mood, energy, and perception. It’s often sold as “Molly,” but many pills and powders don’t contain pure MDMA at all, they’re frequently mixed with other drugs, including synthetics or fentanyl.

**How it looks:** Colourful tablets (often with logos or smiley faces), capsules, or powder/crystals.

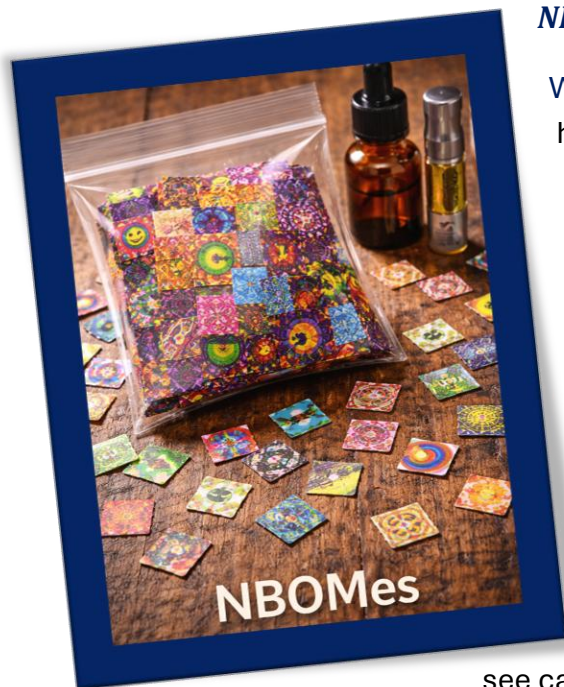
**Why is it risky:** MDMA messes with the brain’s serotonin system — the chemical that controls mood, sleep, and body temperature. Pills vary wildly in strength, and you never know what else is inside.

***The biggest danger is that your body can overheat or dehydrate, or swing the other way and retain too much water, all of which can be fatal.***

**Short-term effects:** Increased heart rate and blood pressure, overheating, dehydration, jaw clenching, nausea, anxiety, panic, confusion, and hallucinations.

**Long-term effects:** Memory and concentration problems, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, damage to serotonin systems, and increased risk of addiction.

**Bottom line:** Ecstasy isn’t “safe party fun.” It’s unpredictable, often mixed with other drugs, and can push the body past its limits very fast.



### ***NBOMes (pronounced “N-BOMBS”)***

**What they are:** NBOMes are super strong synthetic hallucinogens similar to LSD, but they're much riskier. They were made for lab research, not for people to take. Even tiny doses can cause serious problems.

**How they look:** Often sold as small, colourful blotter papers (tabs) that look like LSD. They can also appear as liquids, powders, or on treated paper meant to be placed on or under the tongue.

**Why they're risky:** NBOMes are active at microgram levels, meaning a dose too small to see can be deadly. Unlike LSD, they can shut down blood flow, cause heart problems, and trigger seizures. Many users don't know they're taking NBOMes instead of LSD.

***Effects can escalate fast. What starts as visuals can turn into panic, loss of control, or medical collapse.***

**Short-term effects:** Severe agitation, confusion, panic attacks, hallucinations, dangerously high heart rate and blood pressure, seizures, loss of consciousness.

**Long-term effects:** anxiety disorders, persistent paranoia, memory problems, flashbacks, potential brain injury from oxygen loss, and increased risk of psychosis.

**Bottom line:** NBOMes are not “strong LSD”...they're a different drug with a much higher risk of overdose and death. One tab can be too much. There is no safe guess.



***Phenethylamines (includes amphetamines, MDMA, the 2C-series, NBOMe, PMMA, bromo-dragonfly)***

What they are: A big family that can act as stimulants, empathogens (MDMA-like), or psychedelics (2C-x, NBOMe).

How they look: Pills, tabs, powders; flashy logos.

Risks & red flags: NBOMe & some 2C-x are potent on micrograms, which are easy to overdose.

***PMMA/PMMA-mixes heat the body dangerously with a slow onset (people redose and crash).***

Short-term: Overheating, dehydration, high BP, jaw-clenching, anxiety, panic, hallucinations.

Long-term: Sleep/mood crashes, memory issues; heavy use can damage serotonin systems.

Special note: Bitter or numbing tabs can be a warning sign of NBOMes.



***Synthetic Cathinones (“bath salts,” mephedrone, MDPV,  $\alpha$ -PVP, etc.)***

What they are: Stimulants related to the khat plant but way stronger.

Effects: Big energy, talkativeness, euphoria, then anxiety, irritability, or paranoia.

High-risk issues: Heart strain (racing pulse, chest pain), panic, aggression, psychosis.

***Using NPS in binge patterns, where a person keeps redosing for hours, often leads to extreme exhaustion, intense crashes, and dangerous or impulsive behaviour.***

Long-term: Mood disorders, sleep problems, memory/attention issues.



***Phencyclidine-Type (Novel Dissociatives) (PCP-like, ketamine analogues, arylcyclohexylamines)***

What they are: Dissociatives that change how your brain processes pain, memory, and reality.

Effects: Numb/detached feeling, floating, distorted time/space; at higher doses, hallucinations, loss of coordination.

Risks: Accidents/injuries (judging danger can be difficult).

***Confusion, agitation, violent outbursts or “K-holes” (frightening dissociation).***

***Bladder/kidney problems with frequent use (not just ketamine, some analogues too).***

Long-term: Memory issues, depression/anxiety flares.



### ***Tryptamines (psilocybin-like)***

What they are: Psychedelics that can come from plants/fungi (e.g., psilocybin) or be synthetic.

Effects: Visuals, time distortion, strong emotions, and deep thoughts.

Risks: Set & setting matter; bad mindset or unsafe places, which lead to panic or dangerous decisions.

***Can worsen underlying anxiety/psychosis; interactions with some meds (e.g., SSRIs/MAOIs) are risky.***

Takeaway: Not everything that's "natural" is safe, the dose, purity, your mental state, and the environment all play a big role in how dangerous a drug can be.



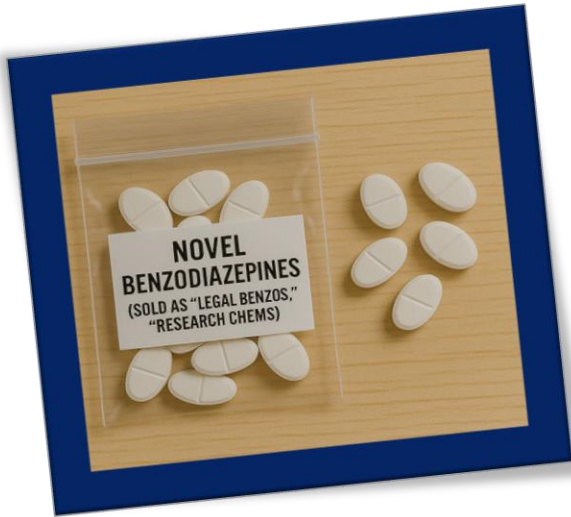
### ***Piperazines (e.g., BZP, TFMPP)***

What they are: Stimulant-like chemicals once explored as medicines. Often sold as MDMA look-alikes.

Effects: Wired energy, nausea, headaches, anxiety, insomnia.

Risks: Rough comedowns, dehydration, high BP/heart rate.

***When BZP and TFMPP are combined, effects can feel MDMA-ish but are harsher and more unpredictable.***



### ***Novel Benzodiazepines (sold as “legal benzos,” “research chems”)***

What they are: Benzo-type drugs were never approved as medicines or illicit copies (e.g., diclazepam, flubromazepam, pyrazolam).

Why they’re scary: Unknown strength, tablets sold online can be wildly overdosed or mixed with opioids.

Blackouts: memory gaps, impaired driving, risky decisions.

### ***Dependence builds quickly; withdrawals can be dangerous (seizures).***

Short-term: Drowsy, slowed thinking, slurred speech, poor coordination.

Long-term: Memory impairment, mood problems, addiction.



### ***Aphrodisiac Tea***

What it is: So-called “aphrodisiac teas” are herbal blends marketed to boost sexual performance, energy, or desire. While some are made from traditional herbs, many sold on the street or online are unregulated and may contain hidden drugs or chemicals not listed on the label.

How it looks: Loose dried herbs or powders sold in small packets or ziplock bags, sometimes pre-mixed as tea. Often labelled with words like “natural,” “herbal,” “love tea,” or “sexual enhancer.”

Why it’s risky: Not all aphrodisiac teas are actually herbal. Some have been found to contain prescription drugs, stimulants, or synthetic substances added secretly to

“guarantee results.” Because there’s no quality control, strength and ingredients vary wildly.

***The effects can hit unexpectedly. One person might feel nothing, while another could experience serious side effects.***

**Short-term effects:** Fast heart rate, headaches, dizziness, nausea, anxiety, increased blood pressure, sweating, palpitations.

**Long-term effects:** Hormonal disruption, anxiety, sleep problems, heart strain, dependence on performance-enhancing products, and potential organ damage if contaminated with pharmaceuticals.

**Bottom line:** “Natural” doesn’t always mean safe. Aphrodisiac teas sold outside regulated markets are a gamble. you don’t really know what’s inside, and the risks often outweigh the promise.

### ***What Makes NPS Extra Dangerous for Teens***

**Brain still developing:** Teen brains are wiring up decision-making and emotion control. Flooding them with strong chemicals can set patterns that are hard to undo.

**Copycat look:** Pills look like meds/candy, and trusting the brand look is a trap.

**Rapid shifts:** Laws change, chemists tweak formulas, and what you read online last month may already be outdated.

### ***The Real-World Bottom Line***

NPS aren’t “safer” or “smarter.” They’re unknown chemicals hitting a developing brain with unpredictable power. Even the same packet can act totally differently from one use to the next. If a friend says “it’s fine” because “someone else tried it,” remember: one pill can contain multiple drugs, that may include fentanyl-type opioids.

# The Bigger Picture: The Early Warning System

You've heard about how dangerous and unpredictable NPS can be, but here's the good news: Guyana isn't sitting back.

To protect young people, families, and communities, the Customs Anti Narcotic Unit (CANU) and the Guyana Drug Information Network (GUYDIN) have created a national Early Warning System (EWS), a smart network that tracks and exposes new drugs before they spread too far.

## What Is the Early Warning System

Think of the EWS as a national safety alarm for drugs.

It collects information from across Guyana, from law enforcement, hospitals, labs, schools, and communities, to spot dangerous new substances appearing on the streets or online.

When something unusual is found, such as a new type of pill or powder, it's sent for testing in specialised labs. Scientists use tools like FT-IR, Raman spectrometers, and chemical analysis to identify what the drug really is and whether it contains deadly ingredients such as fentanyl, cathinones, or other synthetic chemicals.



Once confirmed, the system alerts key partners, police, doctors, and health officials so they can respond quickly and warn the public before the substance causes widespread harm.

## Why It Matters

Drugs are changing faster than ever. Every year, new chemicals appear that look harmless but can be 100 times stronger than the drugs they imitate. Without early detection, people could use these substances without knowing how toxic they are.

That's where the EWS comes in. It helps Guyana:

***Identify new drugs and chemical threats early***

***Analyse their composition and effects***

***Warn hospitals and first responders about what to look for***

***Support law enforcement in removing them from circulation.***

***Inform communities through awareness campaigns***

***In short, the EWS acts as Guyana's first line of defence against emerging drug threats.***

## How It Saves Lives

Here's how it works in real life:

***CANU or the Police seize a strange pill or powder.***

***It's sent to a laboratory for chemical testing.***

***Analysts identify what it is and how dangerous it could be.***

***If it's new or deadly, an EWS Alert is issued nationwide, and sometimes even shared regionally through partners such as CARICOM IMPACS, OAS/CICAD, and UNODC.***

That warning helps doctors, teachers, parents, and young people recognise and avoid the substance before it spreads.

Every alert could mean a life saved, a hospital trip avoided, a tragedy prevented, or a family spared the pain of losing someone.

## Part of a Global Network

Guyana's EWS is part of a global early warning movement. Around the world, countries are building similar systems to share information and protect their citizens from fast-evolving drug trends.

By working with international partners, CANU and GUYDIN ensure Guyana stays one step ahead, protecting not just the borders but the people inside them.



## What this means for you

The EWS doesn't just help the government; it helps you.

The data it collects is used in school programs, community talks, and awareness campaigns, such as "The Truth About Drugs."

Every piece of information helps make better posters, lessons, and prevention projects that reach teens before the streets do.

When you stay informed, you become part of that early warning system too.

If you ever see or hear about strange new pills, powders, or vapes, report it. It could be the tip that helps save someone's life.

## *The Bottom Line*

The Early Warning System is proof that knowledge saves lives.

By tracking, testing, and sharing information fast, CANU and GUYDIN are making sure Guyana stays ready to face new drug threats before they take hold.

Every alert, every test, and every message helps protect your future.

# How to Stay Safe

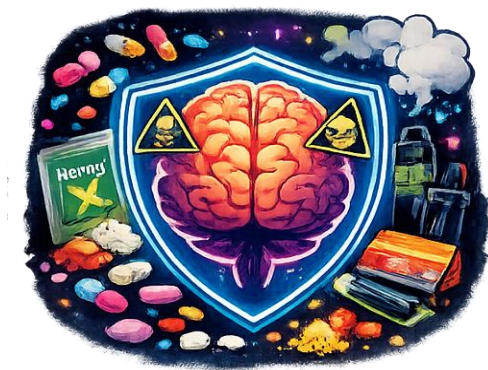
## How to Stay Safe

The best way to stay safe from NPS is to avoid them completely. No matter how “cool” or “harmless” they seem. These drugs are unpredictable and dangerous because you never really know what’s in them. But staying safe isn’t only about saying no, it’s about knowing the facts, recognising the risks, and looking out for your friends, too.



## Think Twice Before You Take Anything

If someone offers you a pill or something to “help you relax,” “get energy,” or “feel good,” take a moment to think before saying yes. Ask yourself if you really know what it’s made of or who made it, and where it came from. Is it worth risking your brain, your future, or even your life for a few hours of feeling different? Most fake pills are produced in secret labs using random chemicals, cleaning agents, or even poisons like rat killer. They’re sold under names like “ecstasy,” “Molly,” “V,” or “party pills,” but no one truly knows what’s inside them. What looks harmless can send you to the hospital, or worse, end your life before anyone can help. You wouldn’t drink from an unmarked bottle, so you shouldn’t trust a pill from a stranger or even a friend who isn’t aware of its actual contents.



## Don’t Trust Pills from Friends, Clubs, or Online

Dealers, and even friends who mean well, often don’t realise how dangerous these substances really are. Pills sold online or at parties are frequently fake, designed to look like real medicines or popular party drugs. Online sellers use fake logos, colours, and packaging to make their products seem legitimate, while street dealers mix different chemicals to save

money and keep buyers hooked. Sometimes, friends share pills thinking they're safe just because "someone else tried it." But the truth is, one single pill could contain six different drugs, and you'll never know what's inside until it's too late.

## Be the One Who Speaks Up

If you see someone offering drugs, or if you know a friend is using, say something. You don't have to shout or shame anyone, just be real. Sometimes, one honest voice is all it takes to pull someone back before it's too late.

Try saying:

***"You don't need that stuff to have fun."***

***"I'd rather stay clear - that's not worth it."***

***"Come on, let's go somewhere else."***

Walking away doesn't make you weak, it shows you're strong enough to make your own choices.

## You Don't Need Pills to Feel Alive

There are safer, healthier ways to find excitement, confidence, and peace:

***Music and dance***

***Sports or fitness challenges***

***Art, gaming, or creativity***

***Spending time with real friends who lift you up***

***Talking to someone you trust when you feel stressed***

The best highs in life don't come from chemicals... they come from experiences that build you up, not tear you down.



# The Truth

**Real confidence is control.** It's choosing your own actions, not letting a pill, a crowd, or a bad moment choose for you. Confidence isn't loud or reckless. It's the quiet power of saying, *"I'm good. I don't need that."*



music,

**Real power is staying clean.** Drugs promise shortcuts, more energy, less stress, instant vibes. But every shortcut has a price: your focus, your memory, your mood, your future. Power isn't about chasing a high; it's about protecting your mind so you can show up for school, sports, family, and the goals you actually care about.

**Your future over a fake high.** One risky night can wreck opportunities you've been building for years. Staying clean keeps your options open, such as college, travel, career, entrepreneurship, real relationships, real peace.



What "in control" looks like (for real)

**You set boundaries.** "No thanks, that's not for me." Short. Calm. Done.

**You choose your circle.** Hang with people who respect your "no." That's real friendship.

**You regulate stress the smart way.** Sleep, water, food, movement, music, journaling, prayer/meditation, talking to someone you trust.

**You think long game.** “How will this choice hit me tomorrow? Next month? Next year?”

**You ask for help early.** Stress is normal. Getting support is a strength, not a weakness.

If you’re feeling pressured

**Buy time:** “I’m stepping outside,” “I’ve got training tomorrow,” “I’m driving.”

**Switch the scene:** Suggest food, music, a game, or another spot.

**Use the buddy system:** Agree with a friend ahead of time to back each other’s “no.”

If you’ve already tried something

You’re not “ruined.” You still have choices.

**Stop now.** The earlier you quit, the easier it is.

**Tell one trusted adult** (parent, coach, teacher, counsellor).

**Check your health** if anything feels off, heart racing, anxiety, or sleep problems.

**Unfollow the pressure.** Mute/unfriend accounts or people pushing drugs.

**Reset your routine.** Sleep, hydrate, eat real food, move your body, create something.

Say these out loud (yes, it helps)

***“My mind is worth protecting.”***

***“I don’t need chemicals to feel confident.”***

***“I control my choices. I control my future.”***

**Bottom line:** Staying clean isn’t boring. It’s **elite self-control**. It’s you choosing clear thinking, steady moods, real confidence, and a future with options. Your health, your mind, your life? **Worth more than any fake.**

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## ***FAKE PILLS = REAL DEATH***

Produced by the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, and the Guyana Drug Information Network (GUYDIN). Part of the National Early Warning System (EWS) initiative.