

Mephedrone

(2-methylamino-1-p-tolylpropan-1-one which is also referred to as 4-methylmethcathinone.)

What is Mephedrone? A stimulant drug with effects similar to MDMA producing euphoria, alertness, talkativeness and feelings of empathy. It can also cause anxiety and paranoid states and risk over stimulating the heart and nervous system to cause fits. Severe nosebleeds have been reported after snorting. A white or off-white powder usually sold on the internet as a legal high and described as a plant food or a research chemical not for human consumption. Sometimes mixed with other cathinones and caffeine. Reports say that it can be compulsive to use and can create a state of psychological dependence. 2010 drugs survey for 'Mixmag' clubbing magazine found that 41% of respondents had used the drug and 34% had used it in the last month. This makes mephedrone the fourth most popular recently used drug amongst clubbers. The chemical name is often shortened to MMCAT or 4-mmc. Other 'brand' or slang names includes Miaow/Meow, drone, 'Bubbles.'

Where does Mephedrone come from? Appears to be produced synthetically using ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine as a starting point. Bulk of production is taking place in China. One suggested production method converts ephedrine in to methcathinone, and then in to MMCAT.

History of Mephedrone First discussed on 'psychonaut' web forums back in 2004. The drug then appeared in 2007 in a pill called Neodoves, manufactured by a company in Israel. The drug was made illegal in Israel on 2008. Started to become widely used in the UK, particularly at festivals, during 2009.

Purity of Mephedrone Many online suppliers boast that their products are 99.9% pure. The market is, however, completely unregulated.

Cost and dosage At present price is around £10 - £15 a gram. Bulk purchases can reduce the price per gram significantly. A gram should be enough for five and ten doses. A typical dose range would be between 75 and 200mg. It can be snorted or swallowed. Snorting hurts the nose and may taste unpleasant. With snorting the effects will come on quickly and effects are usually felt within 15 minutes and peak within half an hour. Effects fade after around an hour.

Many users report experiencing a mild stomach ache when the drug is swallowed. It would typically be put in a capsule or wrapped in cigarette paper. Some users are mixing the powder into their drinks. The effects tend to last longer than snorting. Users will usually take Mephedrone on an empty or near empty stomach as eating first seems to reduce the effects substantially. It will take longer to take effect when swallowed but then can last for up to three hours.

Problems linked to Mephedrone. There has been little scientific or medical investigation of mephedrone. Two A&E case reports from London confirmed the presence of mephedrone. In one, the patient presented with heart palpitations and blurred vision; body temperature was slightly below normal. The patient recovered approximately six hours after oral treatment with the benzodiazepine lorazepam. In the second case, mephedrone had been taken with other substances and the presentation was primarily due to ingestion of GHB.

Users on internet forums have reported the following problems:

Heart/circulatory problems: MMCAT appears to cause significant vasoconstriction – where blood vessels in the body get narrower. This pushes up blood pressure and can reduce blood flow to parts of the body. Some users have reported coldness and numbness at extremities (hands/feet) suggesting reduced circulation. A small number of people have reported pallor and discoloration of knees, legs and feet, and blotches appearing on skin. This may be related to circulatory problems but the exact cause is not clear. MMCAT increases heart rate and blood pressure, putting increased strain on the heart. Some users have reported chest pains, palpitations, and irregular heart beats.

Convulsions: There have been a small number of reports of people having convulsions following use.

Mood/comedown: Some people have reported low mood, depression and irritability following use, especially extended periods of use.

Nose damage: irritation to lining of nose, burning sensation in nose, nose bleeds, scabbing of inside of nose.