



# Mephedrone

## Is there a drug which will keep you buzzing all night that is cheap and legal?

**The simple answer is NO.** Drug users have always moaned about the quality of drugs; they were always better 'back in the day'. Sometimes this is actually true. The drug mephedrone appeared in the UK at a time when the cocaine and ecstasy around were weak and adulterated (to use a technical term – shit). Mephedrone was cheap, reliable and was (for a time) a 'legal high'. Mephedrone is **now illegal**. It is still sold in some areas, but as an illegal drug, although in many places ecstasy and cocaine have regained their popularity as the purity and quality of those drugs has gone up again.

## So what is mephedrone?

As far as we know those bags of white powder sold by dealers as **meph, m-cat or kitty cat, meow** and various other feline related names, contain a chemical called *mephedrone*\*. It is a totally man made chemical related to cathinone, the active drug in the African shrub '**khat**'. There are a number of other cathinone related drugs around, including *methylone*, which has similar effects but is a bit more 'trippy'. It is next to impossible to tell exactly what your white powder is unless you have access to drug testing facilities; which I am guessing you don't have.

\* Full chemical name 4-methylmethcathinone (4MMC).

## What are the effects of mephedrone?

Mephedrone has similar effects (boundless energy and 'luvved up' euphoria) to cocaine, amphetamine (speed) and MDMA (ecstasy). Mephedrone starts working after about 10 to 20 minutes if snorted and 20 to 40 minutes if swallowed. It can come on in a head rush and be quite overpowering, causing some people to feel sick or even barf their guts up (more likely if you have been

drinking or smoking weed). The effects of a single dose can last for 1 to 3 hours if snorted and 4 to 5 hours if swallowed – it's difficult to be precise and many top-up regularly throughout the night while some report losing all sense of time when 'mephedroning'. As with any drug, the exact effects vary from person to person and depend on:

- **Purity** (and adulterants)
- **How much you take**
- **How often you take it**
- **What other drugs you take with it**
- **How you take it** (snorting, swallowing)
- **Your mood, who you're with and where you are**

*"It comes on real strong, and can make you feel disoriented...  
It's just totally euphoric, fabulous, to me it was like luvved-up E"*

## **What happens if you get caught by the police?**

In 2010 Mephedrone (and similar cathinone based drugs) were made illegal and became class B drugs under the *Misuse of Drugs Act* (the same as amphetamine). If you are caught in **possession** you will be taken to a police station, finger printed, have a DNA sample taken and may even have your house/flat searched. It is likely that the police will either caution you (if you admit the offence) but they may charge you under the *Misuse of Drugs Act*.

If you are aged between 10 and 17 your parents will be informed and you will either receive a Youth Caution (like an adult caution) or a Youth Conditional Caution (which means you'll probably have to go along to a Youth Offending Team); or you could still be charged with **possession of a class B drug** and have to appear in court.

If you are caught with ‘larger’ amounts and the police think you were going to sell or give it away (they don’t specify the amount involved), you will be charged with **‘possession with intent to supply’**.

Any offence involving dealing is much more likely to end up in a prison sentence. If you are caught in possession of a white powder the police think is a drug controlled by the *Misuse of Drugs Act* you will be arrested and the drug may be tested. If the drug is not a controlled drug you will be released, however, supplying any substance that will get you high (selling, giving it away) is an offence under the *Psychoactive Substances Act*.

## **Is there a safer way to use mephedrone?**

There is no such thing as a ‘safe drug’, as all drug use involves some risks, but there are things you can do to cut down your chances of coming to harm. There is no research on safer ways to use mephedrone, in fact we know far less about the effects, dangers and long-term consequences of mephedrone use than we do about illegal drugs like cocaine, ecstasy or amphetamine. The only way of avoiding harm from mephedrone is to feed it to your plants – but for those of you who choose to take it as a drug, we offer the following advice to try to reduce the risk to you and your mates. Our advice is based on talking to some people who have been using it, by reading what little research there is and by assuming because it has similar effects, that it also has similar risks to other stimulant drugs.

## **Is it safer snorting or swallowing mephedrone?**

A number of people snort mephedrone when they buy it in powdered form. Snorting mephedrone does seem to be particularly harsh on the nose, causing burning pain and snotty bleeding and may seriously damage the inside of your nose (the mono-nostril is just not a good look).

Although it may take a little longer to take effect, swallowing mephedrone, either by ‘bombing it’ (wrapping a small amount in a cigarette paper and swallowing), or mixing it into your drink and ‘necking it’, or (if you can stand the taste) swallowing it neat, is a better option than snorting. For those who still want to snort it, chop the powder thoroughly and rinse your nose with water after snorting (or at the end of the night).

***“The back of your nose fills up with snotty gunk and blood, and is scabbed afterwards”***

## **How much are you supposed to take?**

There is no safe dose, but if you’ve never used mephedrone before start with as small an amount as possible – one small line if snorting it, or a pinch if bombing it, is enough to get the full experience. Most people who use it all night use small amounts every two hours or so, which is safer than taking a larger amount all in one go, but makes it difficult to judge how much you’re taking. Some people go on to use larger and larger amounts, which is more likely to cause problems and could lead to you picking up a mephedrone habit (more on this later).

***“... there’s no point in taking more after a half-gram to gram because it doesn’t make you go any higher, it just goes on for longer”***

## **Can you inject mephedrone?**

Injecting into a vein (IV injection) is the most risky method of using any drug. When drugs are injected, nearly the full dose hits the brain in a matter of seconds, producing an intense burst of effects called a ‘rush’, but is far more likely to lead to an accidental overdose. Injecting can also damage your veins and body and if injection equipment is shared, spread blood borne viruses like HIV and hepatitis C.

In some areas mephedrone is being injected by traditional stimulant and heroin injectors. Mephedrone injectors report a burning sensation in the veins and it appears to lead to more incidences of ulcers and abscesses than with other stimulant drugs.

## Why do I end up drinking so much when on mephedrone?

Some people like to mix drugs to boost or alter the effects, but this increases the risks involved, particularly mixing two stimulant drugs together as this is more likely to lead to overheating or feeling ill, or, in the worst cases, a heart attack or stroke. Like other stimulants, mephedrone makes you thirsty and keeps you awake (more time for drinking) and even if you do drink vast amounts of alcohol you tend not to feel drunk. This is a waste of money, can still mean you end up in the usual booze-related trouble, and will lead to the mother of all come-downs. If you're out mephedroning, try drinking non-alcoholic drinks at least for some part of the evening or if you are in a club take a water bottle and sip from that.

## Is getting hot and sweaty dangerous?

There have been numerous deaths reported from people overheating when dancing on ecstasy, but this can happen with any stimulant drug, and as mephedrone makes you very hot and sweaty, **heatstroke** (*hyperthermia*) is also a risk. To reduce your chance of heatstroke you need to take regular rests from dancing to cool down and sip up to a pint of water or non-alcoholic drink every hour.

Don't over do this, as there have been a couple of deaths from ecstasy users compulsively drinking extraordinary amounts of water when off their box.

If you feel yourself getting too hot, cool yourself down by taking extra clothes or hats off, splashing water on your face or going outside. Danger signs of heatstroke include feeling ill, stopping sweating and not being able to pee. If you experience any of these symptoms either tell security in a club (who should be trained in first aid) or go straight to A&E. Mephedrone also makes both your sweat and pee have a strong chemical stink.

***“You get cold in places, but feel hot and sweaty in other parts  
– and your heart beats faster but not regular...”***

## **What can I do about teeth grinding and jaw clenching?**

As with other stimulants like ecstasy, jaw clenching and teeth grinding can be an unpleasant side-effect when on mephedrone and can damage your teeth – take some sugar free gum with you and chew that if you start grinding or clenching.

## **What can I do about skin rashes?**

It is reported that mephedrone can bring on quite nasty skin rashes. If these are troublesome get some advice from the local chemist. If the rash doesn't clear up go and see your doctor.

## **What can I do about blurred vision?**

Some mephedrone users say they get blurred vision, which along with giant pupils, is common with stimulant drugs. It is advisable to wear sunglasses if you are using on a sunny day, but unless you work in the music industry wearing sunglasses at night is a bit of a giveaway. If your blurred vision continues after the drug has worn off, see your doctor.

***“It makes your eyes go fuzzy, it seems like tunnel vision  
– clear in the middle but fuzzy round the edges”***

## Does mephedrone cause hallucinations?

A number of people report experiencing confusion, delusions and vivid hallucinations, although these tended to be among those who have been bingeing on mephedrone for days on end and drinking heavily. The hallucinations described to us were full on and often involved seeing people in the room who were not there. If a friend becomes frightened or panicky when they experience hallucinations it is important they stay calm, so take them somewhere quiet and reassure them that what they are experiencing is drug-induced and will not last. If they are breathing rapidly, ask them to breathe in through their nose or to breathe in and out through a paper bag (which slows breathing down).

*“I was staring at the pattern on the carpet in the centre of the room, and first some black smoke came up out of it, then I saw Michael Jackson float out of the smoke. I said to me mate ‘that can’t be Michael Jackson, he’s dead’, and anyway I don’t even like Michael Jackson – then I thought ‘it’s OK, I’m in District-9’ – then I came right out of it, and felt shocked, real terrified... I hope I see Elvis next time”.*

*“I had no idea what was real, and don’t like being that out of control”*

## Is mephedrone a good sex drug?

Although everybody is different in the effect they get from drugs, mephedrone is not generally thought of as a ‘sexy’ drug. It is still wise to carry condoms, as you never know where you will end up particularly if you are on a drink and drugs bender. Most men report that their willies shrink to the size of acorns and they can’t get a proper erection when on mephedrone, although if you do manage to ‘achieve wood’, you can end up grinding away without getting anywhere for a considerable time, so it is worth using some water based lube and a strong condom to avoid any unpleasant chafing.



## What is the come-down like?

Some swear there is a gentle come-down from mephedrone, but most report the usual symptoms of feeling exhausted, depressed, confused and disorientated, with a sore head and a sore everything else – which will obviously be worse if you have been boozing heavily. You won't be able to sleep properly after mephedrone (if at all) – no matter how tired you feel, you'll just have to lay there feeling sorry for yourself. A number of people drink alcohol or smoke skunk to try to help them sleep – which might work up to a point but is going to make the come-down even worse when you eventually wake up. Drinking a pint of water before you go to bed to stop you from dehydrating is a good idea, but as the old sayings go 'there is no such thing as a free buzz' and 'what goes up must come down'. Mephedrone doesn't give you energy; it burns up your existing reserves. Your come-down is the price you pay for getting high.

## Is mephedrone addictive?

Most people who use mephedrone, will use it on an occasional basis, although like any drug it seems that some are so smitten with the experience that they use daily and pick up a mephedrone habit. It is not thought that mephedrone causes a physical withdrawal, it causes psychological dependency rather than physical dependency similar to other stimulant drugs. If you are experiencing problems controlling or stopping your use, seek advice from your local drug service.

*“Once it's in your head, you just want more and more... it's real more-ish”*

## Does it cause mental health problems?

Stimulant drugs can cause **paranoia** (the irrational fear of something or someone out to get you), but this should disappear when the drugs have worn off. Stimulant drugs can also trigger an illness called '**psychosis**' (having strange thoughts and beliefs, hearing and seeing things that aren't there etc.).

At the very least lay off the drugs if you experience paranoia or any 'psychotic' symptoms, and if they carry on after the drugs have worn off you should see a doctor or drug service. People with existing mental health problems or a history of mental illness in their family are far more likely to experience problems. It is also reported that mephedrone often leads to **amnesia** (forgetting what happened while you were on mephedrone). If you find this carries on into everyday life (when you're not on mephedrone) go and see your doctor.

***"Your head is just baffled, you keep forgetting what you are doing"***

## **Does mephedrone kill?**

**Yes.** Although the number of deaths has decreased, from 44 deaths in 2015 to 15 deaths in 2016 in England and Wales, this is most likely as less people are using mephedrone. Deaths involving mephedrone often (but not always) involve the use of other drugs at the same time. There are a variety of causes, such as toxic (poisonous) effects on the body, accidents while intoxicated, heart failure, and heatstroke. There is some evidence that taking mephedrone may trigger suicide in vulnerable people. If you are using mephedrone and have had recent suicidal thoughts please seek help from mental health or drug services.

## **What should i do if it all goes wrong?**

Using on your own is more risky than using in a group, as if anything goes wrong, nobody is there to help. If you are using with friends it is a good idea to talk about what you would do, should anything go wrong. Make a pact to look after your friends the same way you would expect to be looked after by them.

## **Looking after your mates**

- **Help them cool down if they are overheating.**

- **Remember you are more vulnerable when out of your trumpet**, so don't let your mate wander off to a party with strangers – either stay with them or at least make sure you can ring them and know where they are going.
- **If somebody is unwell or puking, don't give them anything to eat and only let them drink water** (never force them to drink anything). If after vomiting your mate wants to sleep, let them but keep your eye on them. Make sure they are lying on their side in the **recovery position** (see below). As unpleasant as it sounds, a common cause of death from drink or drugs is people drowning in their own vomit, because they have passed out lying on their backs.



**1**

Put the right hand by the head (as if they were waving)

**2**

Put the left arm across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek

**3**

Hold the hand in place and lift up the left knee

**4**

Turn them on their side by pushing down on the knee

**If somebody is unconscious it is important to put them in the recovery position, inform security staff (if in a club) or ring for an ambulance.**

Ambulance services don't automatically contact the police. When you call the ambulance you don't have to mention drugs, but tell them that the person is unconscious. When the ambulance arrives, it is important that you tell the ambulance crew what they have taken, as this information could save their life.

**[>]** **aims**  
To provide information on the nature and effects of mephedrone in a question and answer format.

**[>]** **audience**  
Adults and young people engaged in recreational drug use. Use with under 16s with support.

**[∇]** **content**  
Some swearing.

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