

Special Report, December 2021

Potential Novel Psychoactive Substances of Concern

Recent scientific presentations at the Society of Forensic Toxicologists and the American Public Health Association annual meetings highlighted novel psychoactive substances of concern. Available data do not indicate widespread use or adverse consequences and there is no evidence that these substances are yet present in Broward County. However, the purpose of this Special Report is to advise the community about the emergence of these novel psychoactive substances and potential adverse consequences for users.

- **Nitrazene analogues** are synthetic opioid compounds which emerged on the illicit market over the last two years. Little is known about potency or harm potential. However, as with other synthetic opioids, the likelihood of overdose, death, and other adverse consequences among users is high. It is recommended that toxicology labs be on alert for these new analogues. For more information: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33759494/>
- **2-methyl AP-237 and 238** are synthetic opioid compounds which are used in China to treat cancer-related pain. Although these substances are not approved or sold in the U.S., evidence suggests that they can be purchased on the “dark web”. Consequences for users are similar to other potent opioids and include overdose and death. For more information: https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_chem_info/2-Methyl-AP-237.pdf
- **THC-P** (tetrahydrocannabiphorol) is similar to Delta-9-THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana. It can be produced synthetically, and trace amounts can be found in the cannabis sativa plant. A lack of clear legislation which outlaws THC-P at the federal level allows for it to be marketed, packaged, and sold via online dispensaries. THC-P is up to 30 more potent than regular Delta-9-THC, which could lead to harm among users. For more information: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-56785-1>
- **Synthetic nicotine** is a new product in which nicotine is created in a lab, rather than derived from the tobacco plant. New technology allows for cheap and efficient production. Because it is technically not a tobacco product, vendors claim that the FDA has no legal authority to regulate the marketing and sales of synthetic nicotine. It is currently not known whether synthetic nicotine poses additional health risks, compared to nicotine derived from tobacco. However, all nicotine products are addictive and have potential adverse consequences for users. For more information: <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2021/09/07/tobaccocontrol-2021-056626>

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