

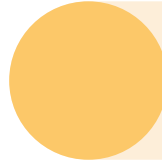


Nottingham
Recovery
Network

Drug & Alcohol Support in Nottingham



Mamba



Synthetic Cannabinoids

Synthetic Cannabinoids, commonly called Mamba, are causing many problems to both people and services. The physical effects are far ranging and can be quite extreme. They can also be very inconsistent.

The prevalence and availability of the drugs are high. The synthetic cannabinoid liquid chemical is mainly bought online, as is the herbal plant matter, then made into the herbal mamba locally. An acetone chemical, usually nail varnish remover, is added to bind the liquid to the herbal plant matter. It is the acetone which gives mamba its distinctive smell, and causes many of the physical problems. Some of the dealers add more acetone to their mamba to make it stronger, double and triple spraying it. This leads to big differences in the effects and quality of mamba.

As the acetone content has gone up the price of the mamba is coming down. A few months ago it was £60 - £70 an ounce (28g), currently it is £40 - £50. The price for a 1 gram bag has stayed constant at £5. This makes it one of the cheapest drugs on the market and also one of the strongest.



When the synthetic cannabinoids first hit the legal highs market, they were aimed at cannabis users. They were legal, sold in the high street, and didn't show up on drug tests. They took off straight away and dominated legal highs sales, both in shops and online. The main market for mamba has now changed, it is much more prevalent with regular drug users than it is among the more recreational users.

Physical Effects and Harms

Some users state that they get cannabis like effects from using it, and it chills them out. Although this may be true, this is not cannabis, and they will still get the adverse effects from the build-up of acetone chemicals in their body.

For all users the tolerances build up quickly and so does the harm it causes.

The effects can be almost instant with users becoming disorientated from just a few tokes on a joint. These feelings can lead to panic attacks and epileptic type seizures.

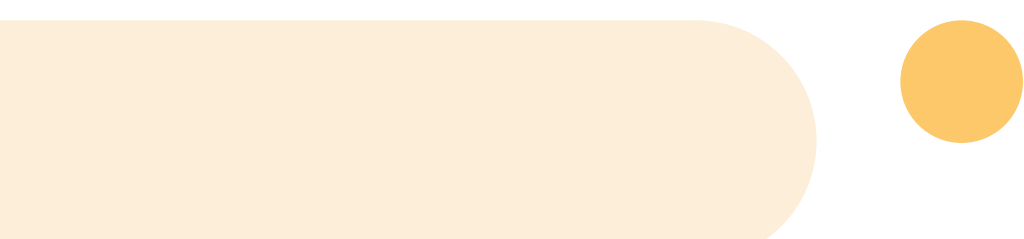
Some people encounter the 'Mamba Man' or 'Devil'. This can be a very frightening and very real experience. A very dark, depressing and debilitating feeling comes over them, which can take a while to get over.

People keep smoking it to keep adverse effects at bay. The pains start when the mamba wears off.

Common effects are: vomiting, a watery frothy yellowy green bile, coughing up thick dark coloured phlegm, bad stomach ache, lower abdomen pain, erratic heart beat, back pain, very runny diarrhoea, extreme sweating, no appetite (leading to severe weight loss), headaches and being short of breath.

Some less common effects are; very dry skin especially on the hands, leading to the skin cracking and pus filled sores appearing, very bad leg shakes, leading to very painful cramp in leg muscles. Similar to this is getting 'pins and needles' effects in fingers and toes which can lead to numbing and loss of feeling.

This leads to people chain smoking mamba to block out these pains. It is not uncommon for people to smoke between 14g and 28g a day. Regular users 'need it' within 15 to 20 minutes of their last spliff, even throughout the night.



Mamba Harm Reduction Advice

The only way to avoid any harm is to not use it.

When smoking mamba, take small drags to test strength and purity. Also be aware that Acetone burns at a high temperature and can burn your mouth and throat.

Always give your bag of mamba a good shake before using, to break up any concentrated 'clumps' of acetone in the product.

Be careful if smoking it after eating. If the mamba knocks you out and you vomit, the food could get stuck in your throat and cause choking. If you see someone collapsed always put them on their side, in the recovery position.

When getting night sweats, particularly if sleeping rough, always make sure you stay wrapped up. If you take your covers off your sweat can get cold, leading to illness, particularly pneumonia.

If approaching someone under the influence of mamba, always do so in a calm and reassuring way. Do not startle them. If they are wandering around then try and get them to sit down.

When you do eat, try and eat healthy food. Use multi-vitamin tablets if possible when not eating

Don't mix with other drugs.

If someone who has used Mamba, has breathing difficulties, severe vomiting, chest pain, heart palpitations or delusional behaviours, call 999 and seek emergency medical attention.

For more information seek specialist advice.

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