

New drugs

How new is new?

New drugs - Don't believe the hype

Every now and then a "new" drug suddenly appears on the drug scene. There are a few points worth remembering about such appearances:

- They are often not new drugs at all.
- They are often attributed with special powers.
- They sometimes don't actually exist.

They are often not new drugs at all

"Crack" wasn't a new drug, it was merely a new way of preparing/marketing cocaine. In fact 'freebasing' - a way of inhaling heated cocaine fumes - had been around a long time and produces almost identical effects. Ecstasy (MDMA) also wasn't new at all. It had been used recreationally in the US for example, for numerous years prior to its association with dance music in the late 1980s. In the US, reports of a new drug 'Ice' circulated but Ice is merely a form of concentrated amphetamine.

"New" drugs are often attributed with special (worse yet) powers:

Crack was reported to be 'instantly addictive' and likely to produce violence, as was Ice. It is common for people worried about the possible effects of a 'new risk' to assume the worse about a drug - before any research has been done on it. It is almost never the case that a drug manages to live up to the hysteria created around it once research has been carried out. It is however, often too late by then. Everything that was said about crack in the 1980s was said about heroin in the 1960s - and was similarly misinformed.

They sometimes don't exist

New drugs are sometimes just existing drugs with new names (street drug terminology shifts over time), or, occasionally, they are the result of elaborate hoaxes. Contacting drug experts, such as DrugScope can help check the existence of new drugs. If they haven't heard about it be cautious on how you report it.

For more information please contact [Ruth Goldsmith](#)