



RISK AND RESILIENCE 

SPICE IN PRISON:

WHAT IT IS. HOW TO STAY SAFE.

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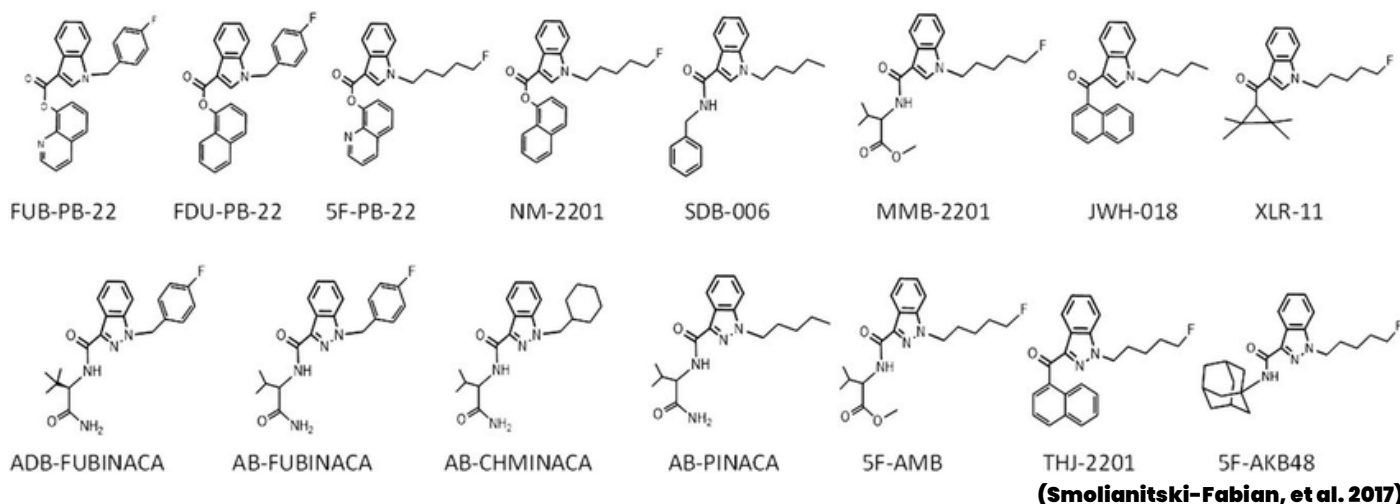
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WHAT IS SPICE?

'SPICE is a street name for a group of drugs called **Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonists (SCRAs)**. These drugs were originally designed to mimic the effects of cannabis, but they have developed their own set of problems over the years. Here are some key things to know:

- **How It's Sold:** SPICE is mainly sold in small bags (1/2 or 1 gram) for about £5 or £10. The bags contain dried plants sprayed with synthetic chemicals. SPICE can also come in vape form or as crystals. In prisons, it's often found soaked into paper or clothing.
- **What It Is:** Unlike natural cannabis, the plant material in SPICE has no effect by itself. The high comes from the synthetic chemicals that are added to it.
- **How It Works:** The cannabis plant has natural chemicals called cannabinoids. The most famous one is THC, which makes you feel high. Other cannabinoids include CBD and CBN, which have different effects. These cannabinoids interact with receptor sites in your brain and body called CB1 and CB2. SCRAs in SPICE work in a similar way to THC, stimulating these receptors to produce effects on mood, thoughts, and physical sensations.
- **More Than Just Cannabinoids:** SCRAs might also affect other brain systems like serotonin and dopamine, which are involved in mood and pleasure.
- **History:** SCRAs were created by researchers in the 1980s. They were never meant to be used as drugs and were not tested on humans.

BELOW ARE THE CHEMICAL STRUCTURES OF A FEW SCRAs:



Did you know? 254 individual synthetic cannabinoids exist. Every time someone uses, they could be using a different type! This is before we think about other chemicals being sold as SPICE but do not contain any SCRAs!

HOW IS IT USED?

SCRAs are created in a lab as a white crystalline powder, primarily produced in China and shipped to Europe. In 2021, China made SCRAs illegal, which slowed production but did not stop it entirely. In Europe, the powdered SCRAs are mixed in batches using equipment like baths or cement mixers, with a chemical such as acetone to dissolve them. This mixture is then used to soak dried plant material, which is packaged into small bags and sold as classic SPICE. Alternatively, the liquid can be sprayed onto or soaked into objects like paper or clothing.

SMOKED:



VAPED:

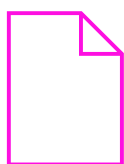


ABSORBED INTO PAPER OR CLOTHING:

For spraying, the liquid is loaded into a spray bottle and evenly applied to the material, ensuring it is thoroughly coated. Alternatively, for soaking, the material is fully immersed in the liquid solution, allowing it to absorb the chemicals completely. After the material is saturated, it is carefully dried to evaporate any remaining solvent, leaving the synthetic cannabinoids embedded in the fibres. This process is often used in prisons, where soaked paper or clothing can be smuggled in and later smoked or ingested.

An example of the process for extracting:

- **Shredding or Cutting:** The clothing is cut into small strips or pieces to increase the surface area for easier extraction.
- **Soaking:** The pieces of clothing are soaked in a solvent, such as acetone, alcohol, or another chemical solvent that can dissolve the synthetic cannabinoids. This helps to leach the cannabinoids out of the fabric.
- **Stirring or Agitating:** The mixture is stirred or agitated to help release the synthetic cannabinoids from the clothing fibres into the solvent.
- **Filtering:** The liquid is then filtered to remove any solid fabric pieces, leaving behind a solution containing the dissolved synthetic cannabinoids.
- **Evaporation:** The filtered solution is allowed to evaporate, usually in a well-ventilated area or with the aid of gentle heat. As the solvent evaporates, it leaves behind a residue of synthetic cannabinoids.
- **Collection:** The dried residue, which contains the synthetic cannabinoids, can be scraped up and collected. **This residue can then be smoked, vaped, or ingested to achieve the desired effects.**



PAPER

Soaked into fake legal letters and sent in.



SOCKS

As well as other clothes.

Did you know? When you smoke SPICE, the chemical is absorbed into your bloodstream within minutes, travels to your brain, and gets you high. When you vape or eat it, your liver processes SPICE meaning it can be up to 4 times longer than smoking it, take longer to hit and often be a lot stronger.

DESIRED EFFECTS:

- euphoria
- relaxation
- forget your problems
- escapism
- pain relief – physical and emotional

UNDESIRED EFFECTS:

- panic attacks
- anxiety
- paranoia
- vomiting
- hallucinations
- memory problems
- palpitations
- lack of motor control

SCRA: ACUTE TOXICITY: NEUROLOGICAL, COGNITIVE AND PSYCHIATRIC

- Numbness, tingling, dizziness, tinnitus, sweating, tremor, sleepiness, passing out, unresponsiveness, rapid eye movement, convulsions; all potentially leading to a coma
- Short-term memory and cognitive deficits, confusion, sedation, thought blocking, nonsensical speech, amnesia, increased focus on internal unrest
- Inappropriate or uncontrolled laughter, anger, sadness, flat affect, depression and suicidal thoughts, excitability, agitation, combativeness, aggressiveness, thought disorganisation, panic attacks paranoid thinking, delusions and auditory and visual hallucinations, changes in perception, acute psychosis

SCRA: ACUTE TOXICITY: PHYSICAL

- High heart rate, blood pressure issues, chest pain, palpitations, heart attack, poor blood flow, kidney injury/failure, stiff joints, muscle jerking/pains
- High/low blood sugar, acidosis, respiratory acidosis, cold extremities, dry mouth, difficulty breathing, pupil dilation, vomiting, loss of sight and speech
- Serotonin Syndrome: Too much serotonin in your system that becomes toxic and can lead to multi-organ failure and death

Evidence on long-term harm is limited and harms are still emerging. Controlled studies are challenging due to the number of synthetic cannabinoids that exist.

Source: Neptune Guidance (2015)

Did you know? SPICE can be 800% stronger than cannabis!

How do you use **SPICE**...

Smoke it?

yes

no

Vape it?

yes

no

Sniff/snort in powder form?

yes

no

Swallow by eating strips of paper soaked in it?

yes

no

Inject anything that's not prescribed to you?

yes

no

Inhale any gas/glue/aerosol that contains it?

yes

no

Drink any liquid that contains it?

yes

no

		No	Yes
1	Answered yes to any of the above questions. (If no, end screening here)	0	1
2	Do you use other drugs alongside SPICE ?	0	1
3	Are you unable to stop using when you want to?	0	1
4	Have you had "blackouts" or "flashbacks" because of your use?	0	1
5	Do you ever feel bad or guilty about your SPICE use?	0	1
6	Do those closest to you ever complain about your involvement with SPICE ?	0	1
7	Have you neglected things because of your use? Think about education, fitness, workshops	0	1
8	Have you engaged in illegal activities to obtain substances?	0	1
9	Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms (felt ill) when you stopped taking SPICE ?	0	1
10	Have you had medical problems because of your use (e.g., memory loss, hepatitis, convulsions, bleeding, etc.)?	0	1

Score

Score	Level	Suggested Action
1-2	Low	Self-monitor to make sure your use does not become a problem and consider some harm-reduction advice.
3-5	Moderate	Further investigation and conversations would be helpful alongside harm-reduction.
6-8	High	Further assessment and support is probably needed as you might be having some problems with your use.
9-10	Very High	You are likely to be having problems with your use. Getting structured support and a medical review is needed.

SPICE FURTHER SCREENING

How do I use it?

**I use it without
any other drug**

*(other than
tobacco or vape
pen)*

**I use it with
other drugs**

*(cannabis, alcohol,
heroin, cocaine,
crack, etc)*

If yes, I use...

Things I like about SPICE

Things I don't like about SPICE

Things that worry me about SPICE

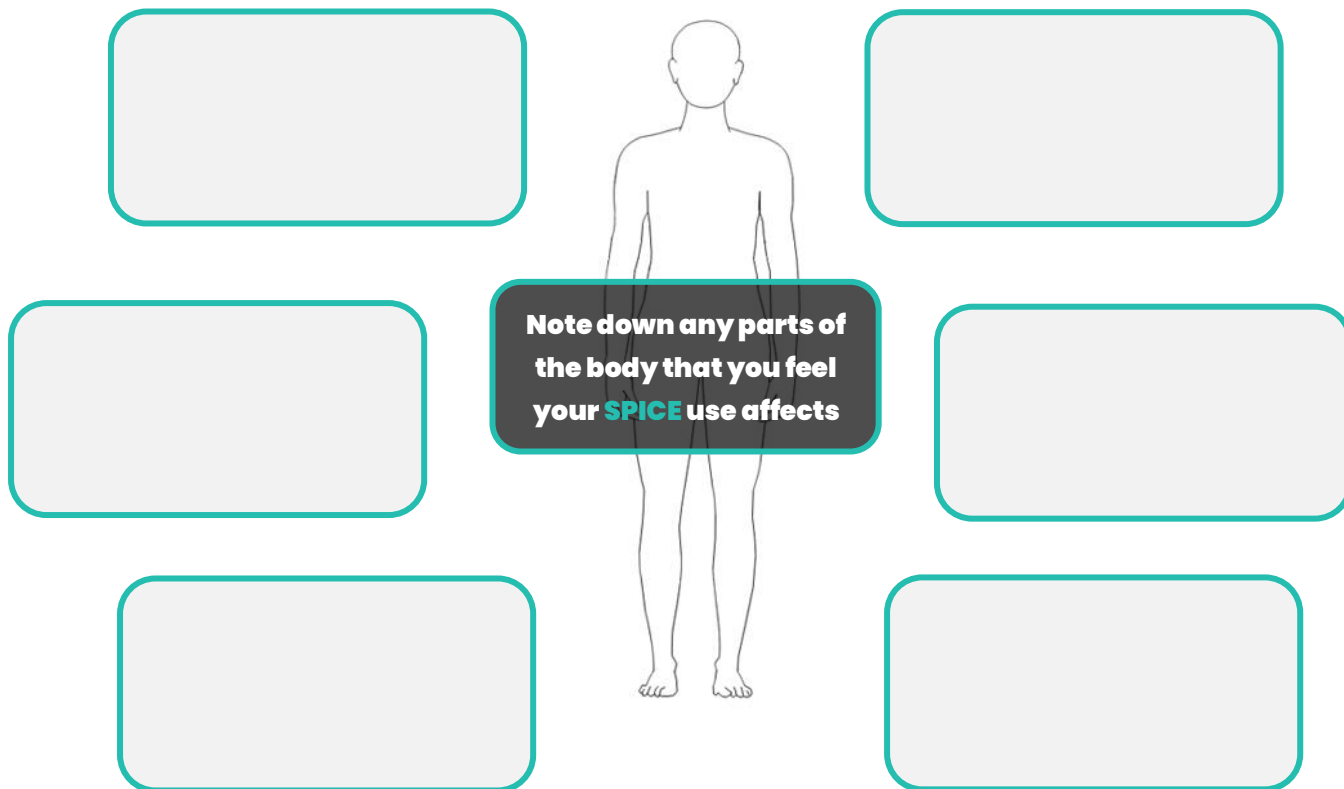
Things I want to change about my SPICE use

Initial questioning based on *DAST-10 (1982)* screening tool

Any further information at this point?

SPICE HOW IT AFFECTS ME

Physical health effects



Note down any parts of the body that you feel your **SPICE** use affects

Mental/emotional health effects



Note down any emotional or mental affects you've noticed from **SPICE**

SPICE HOW IT AFFECTS ME

Social effects *(including families, friends, partners, jobs, housing)*

Friends?

Family?

Partner?

Housing?

Jobs?

Anything else?



Any other negative effects from SPICE use?

HARM REDUCTION

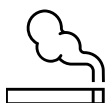
GENERAL

Always remember that SPICE is a name for **254 known strains** as well as other chemicals that can be sold as SPICE. There are some key bits of advice for ***all*** types of SPICE: **to use very small amounts and wait before using anything else, never mix with other substances and use with people you trust.**

IF YOU SMOKE IT ...



Treat every new bag as something new. Go small, go slow. **Matchstick head/grain of rice**



Smoke via joint. Avoid bong or pipe. **Use a long roach**



Most hit quickly but some can take their time. **Avoid redosing for at least 1hr**



Avoid mixing with other substances, including cannabis



Use in environments where you feel **safe** and with people you trust.



Avoid using when you are feeling particularly anxious or angry. **It could heighten the mood.**



It can cause nausea and vomiting. **Remember to eat and drink water when on SCRA's.**



Shake the bag before every use...

BEWARE THE BOTTOM OF THE BAG!

Over time, the contents may settle and the powder may drop to the bottom of the bag

The strongest dose will be at the bottom



Always **shake it up** before use to ensure an even mixture. **When you hit the bottom**, use very, very small amounts.

I F Y O U V A P E I T ...

- ❑ **Small amounts** (aim for a maximum of 1 lung full at a time). Allow a long time before re-dosing.
- ❑ **Use in a safe environment** in case it is not a positive experience. Use with people you trust.
- ❑ **If the product feels stronger** or different than you were expecting, assume they are SCRAAs and cease use.
- ❑ **Remember, vaping will last longer than smoking it** – use smaller amounts than you usually would and resist re-dosing until the effects have gone away.

S O A K E D I N T O P A P E R / C L O T H I N G ...

If you are planning to tear strips of paper and smoke it, follow the advice above for smoking it. If you plan on eating it directly, consider the following to keep yourself safe:

- ❑ **Remember that the SPICE might not have been soaked in evenly or sprayed on evenly.** Always use small amounts and be prepared for some parts to be stronger than others.
- ❑ **If you eat it over smoking it, the effects will take longer to hit, be a lot stronger and will last a longer time.** This will make the bad effects even worse. If you are going to use, consider smoking it.

If you have received SPICE via paper or clothing and you don't want to eat or use the products it is soaked into, you will need to extract it. This takes a long time and using chemicals like alcohol or acetone to do this can be risky. If you are going to do this, keep yourself safe by:

- ❑ **Only use once all of the liquid has evaporated**, this will limit the amount, or other chemicals being absorbed into your body.
- ❑ **Ensure the environment is well ventilated** to ensure that you do not feel any negative effects from the chemicals being evaporated. Ensure windows and doors are open as much as possible.
- ❑ **When the dried residue is collected at the end, use very small amounts when you smoke, vape, or ingested.** The substance could be highly potent.

Did you know? Some SPICE might contain rat poison. The chemicals in rat poison ties up liver enzymes in humans that metabolise drugs, extending their effects. But be warned, regularly using this stops the body producing Vitamin K (this clots our blood) which can cause people to have unexplained bleeding or bleeding that won't stop from cuts. Seek medical help if you are unsure.

SPICE CHANGES I WANT TO MAKE

In ___ months' time, I want my **SPICE** use to be:

What goals do I have to achieve this?

What do I want?	What do I need to do?	Who needs to help me?	When will I have completed this?

SPICE FREE MAP:

Use this area to note down anything else related to your SPICE use.



S P I C E D I A R Y A N D M O N I T O R I N G

	My use – amounts, times, places, people (include SPICE and other drug/medication/alcohol use)	What made me use?	How did it make me feel? (please circle)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

SPICE SAFETY PLAN

What are my ways of coping?

What makes me tempted to use SPICE?	My warning signs are	My safe places are...	I will do these activities...	Other people can do these to help me...	I can also do...	When shall we review this?

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