

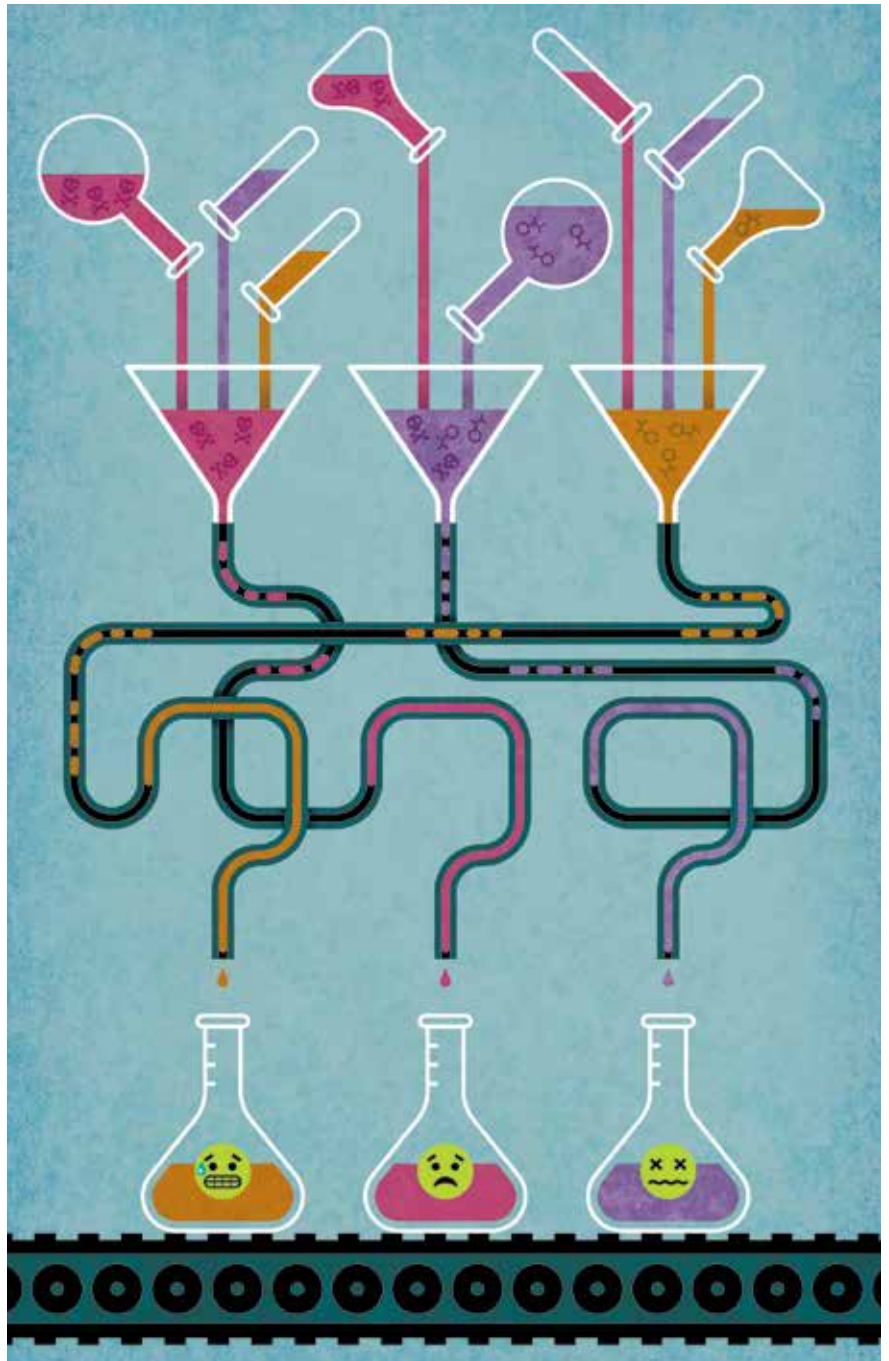
NOT FIT FOR HUMAN BODIES

You probably know that drugs that don't come from a pharmacy or your doctor can be dangerous. But they also may not be what they seem.

MOST DRUGS are synthetic, or man-made. They are made by mixing chemicals in laboratories. Some synthetic drugs help people. They are prescribed by doctors and bought in pharmacies. They are tested for safety.



Other synthetic drugs are counterfeit, or fake. They are made in illegal laboratories. The drugs are sold on the street, online, or in illegal stores. They often have misleading labels that claim these drugs will act like marijuana, prescription pain medications, or other drugs.



Misusing drugs can lead to addiction and overdose. But counterfeit drugs pose additional risks. A counterfeit pill may look exactly like a pill from a pharmacy. But it can contain completely different chemicals. These chemicals

can be much stronger or even deadly.

Read the sidebar. Learn about the dangers of counterfeit synthetic drugs.

Bottom line: Never take any drug that is not prescribed by your doctor and is not bought in a pharmacy.

DANGEROUS EFFECTS OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS



OPIOIDS

Example: Fentanyl

Opioids are powerful pain relievers. They can be **extremely addictive** and even **deadly** if they are misused. **Fentanyl** is a very strong synthetic opioid. Doctors prescribe it to patients that are in extreme pain.

There has been a recent rise in illegal fentanyl. This counterfeit drug is often mixed with other drugs or hidden in fake prescription medications that are sold on the street. Users may not know they are taking it.

An increase in deadly opioid overdoses has been linked in part to products with hidden fentanyl. Never take prescription drugs that are not prescribed by your doctor or that are not bought in a pharmacy. You don't know what chemicals they contain.

CANNABINOIDS

Examples: Spice, K2

Cannabinoids are often called "synthetic marijuana." They are made of dried plant material that is sprayed with chemicals called **synthetic cannabinoids**. These chemicals are similar to THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana. But cannabinoids are much stronger. The drugs can cause **unusual and violent behavior, seizures, heart attacks, and death**. Spice can also be **addictive**.

In 2016, 130 people **overdosed on synthetic cannabinoids** over three days in New York City. This was likely caused by a powerful batch of **K2**. These drugs are not tested for safety. Each batch can be very different, even if the packaging looks the same.

CATHINONES

Example: "Bath Salts"

Fake "bath salts" are not for your bathtub. These synthetic drugs contain chemicals called **cathinones**. They are similar to stimulants like amphetamine and MDMA (Ecstasy or Molly). But these drugs can have powerful effects. They can **increase heart rate and blood pressure**. They can also **cause unusual behaviors**.

People who use bath salts report **intense cravings**. This could mean they have become **addicted to the drug**. Makers of illegal drugs sometimes try to avoid the law. They label products "Not for Human Consumption" to make selling them easier. Many states have passed laws to stop this practice.

TAKE ACTION

>> If someone you know has a bad reaction to what you think is a synthetic drug, **call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.**

>> If they stop breathing, collapse, or have a seizure, **call 911 immediately.**

MORE INFO: For additional facts about drugs and health, visit scholastic.com/headsup and teens.drugabuse.gov.

From Scholastic and the scientists of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services