

Factsheet



Warning: Cannabis with synthetic cannabinoids

Cannabis Quick Tests and synthetic cannabinoids

This factsheet aims to provide information to reduce the risk of unintentionally consuming synthetic cannabinoids by users of illegal cannabis containing Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) where they are unable to take advantage of drug checking services; if available, so-called Cannabidiol (CBD) Quick Tests can be used.

Since the beginning of 2020, legal CBD cannabis has increasingly been mixed with synthetic cannabinoids and sold as illegal THC cannabis in Switzerland¹.

Synthetic cannabinoids are largely unresearched substances. There is hardly any precise information available on their effects, risks, reciprocal effects with other substances or long-term consequences. The risk of overdose with strong intoxication is generally very high with synthetic cannabinoids. This risk increases significantly through incorrect declarations made at the time of sale.

Synthetic cannabinoids are not visually recognisable, nor in terms of taste; only a complex analysis, such as those undertaken by a drug checking process, provides information about the actual substances at hand. If cannabis users do not have the possibility to use drug checking services, they can use a CBD Quick Test.

While **the result of a CBD Quick Test is not comparable to a drug checking result from a laboratory²**, it can be applied inexpensively and easily at home.

A CBD Quick Test allows cannabis users to determine whether their product is CBD cannabis (less than 1% THC content) or THC cannabis (more than 1% cannabis).

CBD Quick Test

THC cannabis (blue)

CBD cannabis (red)



¹ At Zurich's Drug Information Centre (DIZ), a total of 75 out of 155 cannabis samples tested positive for synthetic cannabinoids in 2020; 98% of these samples originally contained legal CBD cannabis which was later spiked with synthetic cannabinoids.

² If a Quick Test is used, Saferparty does not guarantee the quality of the result. This document merely provides a suggestion to people for whom drug checking services are unavailable.

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The most important information about CBD Quick Tests

- Synthetic cannabinoids cannot be detected with CBD Quick Tests;
- Test result: CBD cannabis (red): There has been an incorrect declaration. In this case, legal CBD cannabis was deceptively sold as illegal THC cannabis. Its **consumption is strongly discouraged** as the probability of the sample containing synthetic cannabinoids is very high;
- Test result: THC cannabis (blue): It cannot be ruled out that synthetic cannabinoids have been added. It is **strongly recommended to follow the Safer Use guidelines when consuming**; however, the probability of the sample containing synthetic cannabinoids is relatively small in this case;
- The exact content of THC and CBD cannot be determined by a CBD Quick Test; only a indication is possible (THC cannabis or CBD cannabis); and,
- In order to obtain a precise analysis with the exact THC and CBD content, as well as a verification of potential synthetic cannabinoids, you can hand in your sample for analysis at the DIZ in Zurich.

Further information on the topic of synthetic cannabinoids is available at: <https://www.saferparty.ch/synth-canna.html>

Further information on cannabis drug checking services by the DIZ in Zurich, where you can also find out the THC and CBD content of your sample, is available at: <https://www.saferparty.ch/diz-cannabis.html>

Application instructions

- Use only a very small sample (a few crumbs are sufficient) for the test, otherwise the result will be ambiguous;
- Put the sample into the plastic bag and reseal it;
- Break both ampoules and mix well the sample material with the liquid that emerges;
- If the result is indistinct (neither red nor blue), the test should be repeated with a lower quantity of sample material and a new Quick Test; and,
- If the second result is still ambiguous, the sample should be analysed at a drug checking facility.

General Safer Use information

- With newly purchased, unfamiliar cannabis products, it is advisable to try only a small amount the first time (take two or three puffs) and, subsequently, wait about 15 minutes for the effect to unfold; if the effect is unusual, refrain from further use;
- Avoid mixed use. Mixing cannabis with other substances (including alcohol or medication) is very risky because of the unpredictable, and still unknown, reciprocal effects; and,
- Mix well your cannabis products before consumption to avoid a strong concentration of possible synthetic cannabinoids on individual flower parts. Particular care should be taken with residual material that has fallen off the outer parts of the flower, as it is likely to contain an especially high concentration of synthetic cannabinoids.