

More than 300 Poles taken ill after designer drug use

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Police have detained nine people suspected of trafficking designer drugs after at least 317 Poles fell ill in recent days from taking the psychoactive substances, including dozens who remained hospitalised Wednesday.

More than 214 people were hospitalised in southern Poland because of the synthetic stimulants, most of them in the city of Katowice, regional spokeswoman Katarzyna Kuczynska-Budka said.

Thirty-three people remained hospitalised Wednesday morning, including five in serious condition, she told AFP.

Another 97 users also fell ill, but did not require hospitalisation, she added.

The drugs are thought to include mephedrone, which produces sensations of euphoria and energy similar to the effects of cocaine and ecstasy.

According to local media, the [new drugs](#) are being imported from abroad, notably by mail from Asia. Police have seized several packages addressed to the 20-year-old suspected ringleader of the operation.

Attempts by authorities to crack down on designer drugs have been stymied by the frequent appearance of new varieties. Just this month 114 new substances were added to Poland's list of banned narcotics.

Drug possession and trafficking are offences in Poland, but [drug manufacturers](#) often evade punishment by subtly modifying the [chemical composition](#) of the banned substances.

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