

Betel/Areca/Paan

AKA: paan, betel, catechu

Popularity: popular across Asia; users in the UK from Indian sub-continent

Method of Use: chewed – with betel leaf and lime (traditional) or tobacco (now much more common)

Duration: 30mins

Category: stimulant

Mechanism:

Contains chemical arecoline
This acts on acetylcholine receptors in a similar way to nicotine, promoting alertness, memory and mildly excitatory effects

Effects:

+ve: mild stimulant, freshens mouth, aids digestion, more alert
-ve: anxiety



Law: May theoretically be covered by PSA (unless exempted as a food) but this isn't enforced. Products containing nicotine age restricted.

Cost: £4-100gm

Source: grown in India, Sri Lanka etc; sold in UK via some Asian stores, usually as tobacco/betel mix

Indicators: red staining to lips, gums and teeth
Red spittle

Risks: anxiety, reduced appetite, insomnia, tooth/gum damage, oral cancers

Additional information: internationally one of the most widely used substances. Use amongst people in UK with heritage links to Asia is common but no evidence of cross-cultural use.