

Synthetic Marijuana - Facts you should know.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office and Umpqua Partners for a Drug Free Future would like to alert parents, guardians and those who work with youth about a new synthetic form of marijuana that is being sold under the brand names K2 or Spice in local head shops and online as an incense product.

Available legally and marketed as a dried herbal blend for incense, it is more commonly smoked or inhaled through a pipe because it produces a high that mimics marijuana. The herbs have been sprayed or coated with synthetic chemicals that replicate the effects of THC. These chemicals do not show up in standard drug screens.

Emergency Room doctors in the Portland Metro area are seeing the first cases of overdose from this new synthetic marijuana product.

Oregon Poison Control reports that users can experience a range of side effects, including delusions, panic attacks, vomiting, heart palpitations, elevated blood pressure, agitation, dilated pupils, tremors and seizures.

While K2 and other brands of synthetic marijuana are currently legal and available in Oregon, it is illegal in most European countries and has recently been banned in Kansas and Missouri (with several other states working to do the same). This topic is also on the radar for the Oregon Sheriffs for the next legislative session.

Parents: We encourage you to not only be aware of this new drug, but to talk to your child about its dangers. Here are some facts and talking points to share with your kids.

K2 was first created as part of a scientific study on marijuana. In the 1990s, a chemist at Clemson University made a synthetic product that was similar to THC and named it JWH-018. The recipe made its way into the wrong hands and has since been growing in popularity.

K2 a product composed of herbs or spices sprayed with a synthetic product like JWH-018 to supposedly give a legal high like marijuana. JWH-018 is three times more potent than naturally occurring THC in marijuana is. JWH-018 and similar synthetically made products are called synthetic cannabinoids or mimicking cannabinoids and were developed to test the effects of THC on mice, not to be taken by humans.

There are no regulations in Oregon on K2. A minor could currently purchase this drug legally.

Just because it's legal does not mean it is safe. Synthetic drugs and herbal drug products like Spice and K2 are not made in a controlled environment and so you never really know what you are ingesting or what the potentially harmful effects may be.

Side effects include: rapid heart rates, elevated blood pressure, severe agitation, anxiety, vomiting and hallucinations. There has been one known case of an otherwise healthy teen that lapsed into a coma after using the drug.

K2 toxic levels and long-term effects are yet unknown. A person using this drug is basically playing 'Russian Roulette' with their future.

Sources: CADCA: Researchers Warn About Dangers of Synthetic Marijuana, Mar. 2010. Live Science: Fake Weed, Real Drug: K2 Causing Hallucinations in Teens, Mar 2010.