



THE JEFFERSON PARISH ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED CITIZENS

Parents Guide to Synthetic Marijuana

The Jefferson Parish Alliance of Concerned Citizens (JPACC) has been working to increase public awareness and safety and to improve the quality of life in Jefferson Parish by developing and implementing strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, thus decreasing the negative impact of their use on our community.

There is a new drug that should be of concern to parents. This drug is a synthetic form of marijuana.

Spice is a brand name for a mixture of herbs that has been sold in Europe, Canada and other parts of the world since 2008, as an incense, as well as over the internet as an "herbal smoking blend". Despite what the package lists as ingredients, labs testing the product did not find any of the herbs listed on the package. It is reported that these products are made of cheap plant material sprayed with a solvent mixed with chemicals synthesized in third world labs (May 1, 2009 Analytical Chemistry). Spice is smoked often mixed with tobacco for its cannabis-like effects which is caused by the added synthetic cannabinoid drugs.



The product is marked not for human consumption. Although it is legal in most states, it is now banned in Europe, Kansas and by the military. The federal Drug Enforcement Administration has classified it a "drug or chemical of concern."

What other names is Synthesized Cannabis sold under?

- Spice: (Gold, Silver, Diamond, and Tropical Synergy)
- Original Diamond Spirit
- Mojo
- Yucatan Fire
- K2 : (Blonde, Summit, Citron)
- Smoke (XXX, Plus, Original)
- Aroma Smoking Blend
- Aura: (Mystic, Sapphire, Ruby)
- Gonjah
- Serenity
- Black Mamba

What are the side effects of Spice? Many people experience the following:

- Seem dizzy
- Seem silly and giggly for no reason
- Have a hard time remembering things that just happened
- Bloodshot eyes
- Rapidly increased heart rate
- Loss of consciousness
- Paranoia
- Psychotic episodes

A school resource office in Maine reported receiving information from a school nurse at Maine Central Institute in Pittsfield that several students (under 18 yrs old) had obtained K2 and after smoking it experienced bad side effects-- including seizures and neurological problems. In one case, the students are still experiencing neurological issues.

What are the long term health effects of using these synthetic substances? While the long term health effects of marijuana use are well known, there is not enough known about these synthetic forms of marijuana. With these drugs being rather new, the long term health effects are still unknown, which makes its use a dangerous risk. Experts believe that these substances can cause "psychosis-like panic attacks, heart problems and addiction". They also believe that they pose overdose risks.

There is no data on these drugs' toxicity or how long they stay in the body. In mice, they can lead to a lower body temperature, partial paralysis and the temporary inability to feel pain, according to the DEA.

Because these synthetic cannabinoids are being added to plant matter, there is concern about the risk of accidental overdoses. Overdoses and hospitalizations related to products containing synthetic cannabinoids have been reported in Missouri and Georgia. The Georgia Poison Center has fielded nearly 20 calls since January 2010 from patients with symptoms caused by K2 who needed emergency care according to State Rep. Jay Neal. .

Finally, preliminary research has found examples of addiction and withdrawal symptoms linked to chronic abuse of products containing JWH-018 and other synthetic cannabinoids.

Adolescents and other members of the public may assume that these products are both safe and non-addictive because they are "legal." In reality, the presence of HU-210, JWH-018, and JWH-073 in these blends present serious risks to users because the chemicals are very potent psychoactively and may present serious health risks to users.

Long-term effects of using marijuana:

- impairments in learning, memory, perception and judgment
- some people experience paranoia, hallucinations, intense anxiety, panic attacks- psychological dependence

requiring more of the drug to get the same effect

- increased risk of cardiovascular problems including chronic low blood pressure
- increased risk of chronic pulmonary disorders, including cancer (lung/mouth), emphysema, persistent cough, excess phlegm, more frequent chest colds and lung infections
- decreased social inhibitions and exposure to risky situations
- experience "amotivational syndrome" or "burnout," which is characterized by a general apathy toward life events

Keeping Your Child Safe

First, it requires keeping an eye on your children's activities. Secondly, watch out for these signs of drug abuse:

- Drastic change in mood without reason
- Abnormal sustained fatigue or bursts of energy
- Change in sleep or appetite patterns
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Withdrawal from family activities or decline in adherence to family rules
- Change in friends or loss of interest in typical activities
- Decline in school performance and/or attendance
- Irresponsibility
- Aggressive behavior
- Lies about whereabouts or events
- Unexplained loss of money or possessions

To sign up for our newsletter or to get more information, go to our website <http://my.jpacc.org>.

JPACC was created in September 2003 by a group of representatives from organizations concerned with alcohol and drug use convened by Jefferson Parish District Attorney Paul D. Connick, Jr.

JPACC meets the first Wednesday of every month. Join us! For more information call 504 361-2917 or email rwilliams@jpacc.org