



HEALTH ALERT

K2/SPICE

Over the last year, the Baltimore County Department of Health has seen a significant increase in the use of synthetic marijuana—also known as K2/Spice. The likely users of this product are 14-27 year olds.



K2/Spice is readily available, and until the manufacturing and selling is prohibited, we want educators and parents to be informed.

WHAT IS IT?

- K2/Spice products are a mixture of herbal/spice plant products that are sprayed with potent psychotropic chemicals. They are often contaminated with unidentified toxic substances, which can contribute to adverse health effects. Several compounds share chemical structure with known cancer causing agents.
- This “synthetic marijuana” mimics the effects produced by the psychoactive component of marijuana, THC: elevated mood, altered perception and aggression.
- There is a strong misperception among youth that K2/Spice is “harmless” or a “safe alternative high” because of how it is labeled and sold.
- It is most often smoked, but can be mixed in with foods or drinks.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

- Medical reports indicate that K2/Spice drugs potentially result in users developing a rapid and powerful addiction on a level not usually found among smokers of “real” marijuana.
- K2/Spice has been linked to emergency room incidents, including suicide attempts, extremely elevated heart rate/blood pressure, comas, seizures, and heart attacks.
- Poison Control Centers nationwide have reported nearly 2,000 K2/Spice cases since 2010.



WHERE CAN YOU GET IT?

- Marketed under a variety of names including: K2/Spice, Pep Spice, Spice (Silver, Gold, Diamond), Smoke, or Scooby Snax. It is usually sold in a variety of colors/flavors often in foil packaging.
- Sold legally in tobacco shops, gas stations, and convenience stores as “incense,” marked “not for human consumption.”
- Mail order advertising is found easily online.
- K2/Spice sales have reportedly increased from around \$1,000 daily to over \$10,000 daily nationwide.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

- Developed during research for National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) on cannabinoid receptors, these chemical compounds were never tested on humans nor approved by FDA.
- Manufacturers of K2/Spice products attempt to evade legal restrictions by substituting different chemicals in their mixtures.
- Testing for the presence of specific illegal compounds is difficult and expensive.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Educate yourself and others about the dangers of K2/Spice and other synthetic drugs.
- Participate in local prevention activities to prevent substance abuse.
- Join community efforts to promote healthy decisions and healthy behaviors.
- Support actions to limit the availability of synthetic drugs.
- Seek medical treatment and counseling for active users.
- If you have concerns about K2/Spice in your community, contact the Baltimore County Department of Health at 410-887-3828.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- www.drugabuse.gov
- www.justice.gov/dea
- www.stopdrugabuse.com

Baltimore County Department of Health | 6401 York Road - Third Floor | Baltimore, MD 21212
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