

# Synthetic Marijuana – K2 or Spice

## Fact Sheet

### What is synthetic marijuana?

Synthetic marijuana is a mixture of dried herbs and spices sprayed with chemicals that, when smoked, create a high similar to THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana. “Spice” and “K2” are two popular names for these products.<sup>1,2</sup>

### How is it packaged?

Synthetic marijuana is usually sold as dried leaves in a small bag. It is often labeled as incense, potpourri, or herbal smoking blend. It is sold under a variety of brand names including K2, Spice, Genie, Yucatan Fire, King Krypto, Mr. Nice Guy, K-3, Red Magic, Blueberry Medication, Super Skunk, Black Mamba, Bliss, Bombay Blue, and Zohai. The Children’s Hospital of Michigan Poison Control Center (PCC) has noticed the use of newer products that “claim” to be stronger. Their name contains an “X,” such as “11X,” indicating a higher potency. Package labeling often warns consumers that it is not for human consumption.



### Why do people smoke synthetic marijuana?

The drug is smoked to get high. Since it was first sold legally at convenience stores, gas stations, and head shops, it may be thought of as a legal or “safe” high.

### Are there any dangers to smoking synthetic marijuana?

Yes. Patients are presenting to emergency departments with elevated heart rates and blood pressure, drowsiness, agitation, hallucinations, seizures, tremors (shaking), vomiting, paranoia, and loss of physical control.<sup>1</sup> There has been one related death in Michigan. The long-term health effects are not fully known.<sup>2</sup>

### Who is most likely to use synthetic marijuana?

Most cases are among males, teens or young adults.

### How many people are using synthetic marijuana?

In 2011, 11% of US high school seniors reported using synthetic marijuana in the past year.<sup>3</sup>

The Michigan PCC collects data on exposures called in by the general public and health care providers. Nationwide and in Michigan, the number of reported synthetic marijuana exposures has gone up. In 2011, there were 6,995 cases in the US<sup>4</sup> and 224 in Michigan.

### Is it illegal?

In October 2010, seven artificial marijuana chemicals (JWH-015, JWH-018, JWH-073, JWH-200, JWH-250, CP-47,497, HU-210) were made illegal in Michigan with penalties similar to marijuana possession.<sup>5</sup> Products that contain one or more of these chemicals are illegal. However, as new formulas or versions of these drugs are marketed, they may contain chemicals not covered by the current law.

### What if I have more questions?

The Michigan PCC is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer medical questions or concerns related to poisoning events. The PCC Help Hotline is: **1-800-222-1222**.

### References:

1. <http://www.poisontcenter.tampa.org/resources/1/substances/Spice-K2.pdf>
2. <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/abuse/index.htm>
3. <http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2011.pdf>
4. <http://www.aapcc.org/dnn/Portals/0/Synthetic%20Marijuana%20Data%20for%20Website%201.12.2012.pdf>
5. [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(fic1ydau4gnnoaaj41ugcsab\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-333-7212](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(fic1ydau4gnnoaaj41ugcsab))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-333-7212)

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