Health and safety warning

What should you do if someone has used synthetic cannabinoids?

Call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222. Experts can help you decide whether someone can be treated at home, or whether he or she must go to a hospital.

Dial 9-1-1 immediately if someone:

- Stops breathing
- Collapses
- Has a seizure

What are synthetic cannabinoids?

Man-made drugs that are chemically different from chemicals in cannabis. When sold, these products are marketed to exhibit the same effects of cannabis.

The chemicals are sprayed on dried, shredded plant material that look like cannabis so they can be smoked or sold as liquids to be vaporized and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other devices.

Fast facts about synthetic cannabinoids

- Commonly known as “synthetic marijuana” or “fake weed” because it copies the effects of marijuana.
- These products are usually sold in colourful packaging or plastic bottles. The fun packaging tricks people into believing that they are safe when these substances affect the brain more severely.
- There are hundreds of brand names. Most common types brands are:
  - K2
  - Spice
  - Spike

- Because of its dangerous nature, it is illegal to sell, possess or distribute synthetic cannabinoids.
- In most states, possession of synthetic cannabinoids will lead to felony charges.

Health effects

The chemicals present in many synthetic cannabinoids are often unknown and tend to change from batch to batch. Because of this, these products may cause different effects than expected, possibly life threatening.

Psychotic effects:

- Extreme anxiety
- Confusion
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations

Physical effects:

- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Violent behaviour
- Kidney damage
- Suicidal thoughts
- Seizures

Synthetic cannabinoids can be addictive. Users trying to quit have experienced:

- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability

(Adapted from the National Institute on Drug Abuse)
https://www.drugabuse.gov/