



Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

Synthetics

(Also Called Synthetic Cannabinoids or “Synthetic Marijuana”)

October 2015

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- **Synthetics, also called synthetic cannabinoids or “synthetic marijuana,” are extremely dangerous and addictive.**
- **These substances can be life-threatening and can cause intense hallucinations and psychotic episodes. Individuals may have suicidal thoughts and can hurt, maim or even kill themselves or others while under the influence of these man-made substances.**
- Effects of use can range from irregularities in blood pressure, agitation, irritability, nausea/vomiting, confusion, drowsiness, headache, electrolyte abnormalities, seizures, anxiety, paranoia, aggressive behavior, loss of consciousness, addiction, kidney failure, hypertension and even death.
- Synthetics are man-made drugs that can be particularly popular among young people. Those who are homeless or who suffer from mental illness may be at increased risk for use of synthetics.
- Synthetic liquid compounds are applied to dried leaves and plants to give a natural appearance, similar to marijuana. These plants, however, have nothing to do with marijuana. For that reason the name “synthetic marijuana” is very misleading and may lead users to believe that these drugs are less harmful than they are.
- The substances are often marketed as an inexpensive way to get a marijuana-like high or as a “legal” alternative to marijuana, however, in New York State it is unlawful to sell, possess, or manufacture these substances.
- Synthetics have been sold under brand names such as K2, Spice, Green Giant, Geeked Up, Caution, Smacked, Wicked X, AK-47, Herbal Incense, Fake Weed, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, Moon Rocks, Fire, Aroma, Earth impact, Mr. Smiley, Mr. Nice Guy, Zohai, Black Mamba, Dream and other names.
- Synthetics are often packaged in foil packets that can be marked as home incense, or herbal smoking blends. Packaging often has claims that the contents are safe and natural and not easily detected in standard drug tests. However, there is nothing natural about the psychoactive chemicals applied to these plant materials.
- Other times packages will be labeled as “not for human consumption.”
- Synthetics are generally smoked and are extremely dangerous due to the manner in which the chemicals bind to the receptors in the brain, particularly in the adolescent and young adult developing brain.
- These products are sold on-line and in drug paraphernalia stores, bodegas, gas stations, convenience stores, and other similar retail establishments.
- It is illegal in New York State to possess, sell, offer to sell, or to manufacture synthetic cannabinoids.

[Public Health Law Section 225, Title 10, Part 9.]

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Start the conversation about alcohol and drug abuse and designer drugs. Explain that “synthetic marijuana” is very different from marijuana and it is not safe. It contains powerful chemicals and can be dangerous and even deadly.
- Explain to your child that synthetics are NOT marijuana.
- If someone is having difficulty breathing or exhibiting life-threatening symptoms after using synthetics, call 911. If you suspect someone has used synthetic marijuana, contact the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- If you have information about the illegal distribution of these synthetic drugs or bath salts, call the NYS Governor’s Synthetics Hotline: 1-888-99-SALTS. Reports can be made anonymously.
- Synthetics are not detected by standard urine toxicology screens; therefore exposure should not be ruled out based on negative screening results.
- Referrals for addiction treatment are available by calling New York State’s HOPEline at 1-877-846-7369, texting the HOPEline Short Code at 467369, or calling New York City’s 1-800-LIFENET hotline.

For additional information, visit:

www.oasas.ny.gov