



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Mike Beebe

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This is an Official

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ADVISORY (EXPANDED)

March 17, 2010

SUBJECT: K2 Synthetic Marijuana Use. This advisory is an expanded version of the health advisory released on March 15, 2010, regarding “K2”.

Health care providers should be aware of signs and symptoms reported among some users of “K2”, a synthetic marijuana product that is legal and readily obtainable in Arkansas. Providers should note that use of this substance, alone or in combination with other substances, may cause symptoms including anxiety coupled with agitation, tachycardia, elevated blood pressure, pallor, vomiting, tremors, hallucinations, and possibly seizures. The Arkansas Department of Health asks that you report to the Arkansas Poison and Drug Control Information Center at 1-800-376-4766 any patient with compatible signs and symptoms that are thought to result from “K2” use.

“K2” – also known as “K2 Spice”, “Spice”, “K2 Summit”, “Genie”, “Zohai” and various other names – is an unregulated mixture of dried herbs that are sprayed with a synthetic cannabinoid-like substance and sold as incense. The product is typically burned and the smoke is inhaled for effect. The cannabinoid-like substance in this product acts on the same brain receptors as does marijuana. A great many of these substances have been synthesized and it would not be possible to know how much or which, if any, of these many synthetics are present in “K2” without doing an extensive chemical analysis. “K2” and similar products do not test positive as marijuana or as any other illicit substance when subjected to urine drug testing.

“K2” is sold legally in Arkansas and it is available for purchase from retailers in many parts of the state. The product is also widely available on the Internet.

Since early-February 2010, poison control centers in other states have received questions from emergency department (ED) physicians regarding management of patients who have had adverse reactions after smoking “K2.” The Arkansas Poison and Drug Control Information Center has had four calls about “K2” as of this date.

Signs and symptoms associated with smoking “K2” as reported from other states are:

- tachycardia,
- elevated blood pressure,
- anxiety,

- pallor,
- numbness and tingling,
- vomiting,
- agitation,
- hallucinations,
- and, less commonly some cases, tremors and seizures

Although these are not the usual responses associated with marijuana use, most have been reported with some frequency as adverse effects in naive marijuana users or in some cases when highly potent marijuana products are used. It is also possible that some of these reactions are a result of the other unrecognized chemicals present in the smoked “K2” that are not related to the cannabinoid receptor system.

The Arkansas Department of Health recommends the following:

- Ask about “K2” use in patients who present for care with compatible symptoms (anxiety coupled with agitation, tachycardia, elevated blood pressure, pallor, vomiting, tremors, hallucinations, and possibly seizures) and substance use is suspected.
- Be aware that these chemically-related cannabinoids do NOT cross-react with delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) on the standard urine immunoassay (UDS) tests that reference laboratories use for comprehensive drug screens.