

Drug Facts: Spice (Synthetic Marijuana)

(For more info – 803-230-3066)

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"Spice" refers to a wide variety of herbal mixtures that produce experiences similar to marijuana (cannabis) and that are marketed as "safe," legal alternatives to that drug. Sold under many names, including K2, fake weed, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, Moon Rocks, and others — and labeled "not for human consumption" — these products contain dried, shredded plant material and chemical additives that are responsible for their psychoactive (mind-altering) effects.

False Advertising

Labels on Spice products often claim that they contain "natural" psycho-active material taken from a variety of plants. Spice products do contain dried plant material, but chemical analyses show that their active ingredients are synthetic (or designer) cannabinoid compounds.

How Does Spice Affect the Brain?

Spice users report experiences similar to those produced by marijuana—elevated mood, relaxation, and altered perception—and in some cases the effects are even stronger than those of marijuana. Some users report psychotic effects like extreme anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations.

So far, there have been no scientific studies of Spice's effects on the human brain, but we do know that the cannabinoid compounds found in Spice products act on the same cell receptors as THC, the primary psychoactive component of marijuana.

How Is Spice Abused?

Some Spice products are sold as "incense," but they more closely resemble potpourri. Like marijuana, Spice is abused mainly by smoking. Sometimes Spice is mixed with marijuana or is prepared as an herbal infusion for drinking.

