

Ask a Cop Submission
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October 26, 2010

Question: I'm the parent of a teenager and I've heard he and his friends talk about something called "Spice" and "K-2". What is that?

Answer: That's an excellent question; I'm so glad you asked. Spice and K-2 are only two names which refer to synthetic marijuana, or fake pot. There are many more brand names or slang terms like Silver, Gold, Purple Flake, Black Mamba, Jamaican Breeze, Super Nova and Mr. Nice Guy. These products are all basically the same thing; a dried out plant-like material that's crushed up and then sprayed with chemicals that mimics the active ingredient in Marijuana, which is THC.

These products can be found at head shops, convenience markets, gas stations and on-line outlets across America. This stuff is marketed in tea bag size packets, for the most part, and usually contains between 1.5 - 3.5 grams of product.

If you talk to kids or young adults, they say this stuff gets them high like marijuana, but it's legal. Legality aside, what's troubling is the potential harmful effects. In fact, the packets themselves usually have a written warning that states "Not for Human Consumption" and are sold by storekeepers as incense. But, this isn't how kids are using it at all; they smoke it or liquefy it and drink it, just like marijuana. The packaging also contains language like "100 percent drug test safe", and that seems to be true for the most part.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers has received in excess of 1,600 calls this year from health care professionals or panicked parents as a result of ingestion. Poison control authorities have reported the symptoms of this substance include dizziness, nausea, agitated behavior, abnormally high heart rates and hallucinations. There are recent reports, in states other than Arizona, which have suggested this synthetic marijuana is linked to the deaths of three teenagers.

To date there are at least 10 states which have legislation that has banned substances like these, and other states are looking at laws that will ban it. Currently, there is no ban in the State of Arizona. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration is exploring at the ability to classify or "schedule" the active ingredients as illegal, and their experts are currently conducting the scientific testing required on these substances before any kind of scheduling could take place. The safety of our children is so important, please do your own research and discuss destructive behaviors like these with your kids.

