

How Is Spice Made?

The NIDA Blog Team

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A lot of the time, Spice (sometimes called “fake marijuana” or K2) is packaged and sold as a mixture of harmless “natural” herbal or plant ingredients. But though Spice products may contain dried plants (like tea leaves), what makes them a drug are the synthetic (man-made) chemicals the plant material is coated with.



Those chemicals are anything but “natural,” and the number of them keeps growing: in 2009, two synthetic chemicals were found in Spice; in 2012, that number had climbed to 57.

What Chemicals Are in Spice?

You just can’t know for sure.

The director of a poison control center said this about the chemicals in Spice: “These are literally laboratory chemicals, they have nothing to do with marijuana....This is not pharmaceutical grade anything.”

Even when officials do figure it out and make the chemicals illegal, the Spice makers just start using different chemicals. Then whenever new laws make the new chemicals illegal, the producers change the chemicals *again*. There seems to be an endless supply of nasty chemicals they can put in these products.

But What We Do Know, Isn’t Good

Spice makers will sometimes coat the leaves with roach spray, like Raid, to help cover up other chemicals that might be traceable to the Spice producer. A chemical used in the early days of Spice

production, JWH 018, is so dangerous it's been labeled as toxic poison.

If you don't know what it's made of, there's no way to predict what it will do to you. As one expert said, "Who knows what dose [Spice users] are getting. One time you get a little tingly, the next time you're in ICU....It's kind of Russian Roulette, really."

It's a gamble more people seem to be losing. In 2010, Poison Control Centers got over 2,900 calls involving Spice; in 2015, by June 3, they had received almost 7,000 calls about it. The majority of the calls were about people having a stroke or seizure because Spice spiked their heart rate. Spice can cause reactions even worse than that: paralysis, kidney damage, brain damage...the list goes on.

Bottom line, if you're offered the chance to get high off of "fake marijuana," keep in mind that nobody can say what's in the batch of Spice you end up with. And do you really want to trust what a drug dealer says? You may get more than you bargained for, and not in a good way.

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