



## Department of Health

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**DATE:** April 17, 2015

**TO:** Hospitals, Emergency Departments, and Urgent Care Centers

**FROM:** NYSDOH Center for Environmental Health

### Health Advisory:

#### **Increase in Synthetic Cannabinoid-Related Adverse Events and Emergency Department Visits**

Please distribute immediately to: Hospitals, Emergency Departments, ICUs, Urgent Care Centers, Medical Director, Nursing Director, and Risk Managers

### SUMMARY

- New York State Department of Health has been informed of a recent increase in synthetic cannabinoid-related adverse events and emergency department visits, with over 160 individuals visiting health care facilities since April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Healthcare providers should consider synthetic cannabinoid use when evaluating patients who have compatible signs and symptoms.
- Synthetic cannabinoids are not targeted in standard urine toxicology screens; therefore, synthetic cannabinoid exposure should not be ruled out based on negative screening results. Consult your laboratory for preferred testing methods.
- Health care providers should call the Poison Control Center (PCC) (1-800-222-1222) for guidance on the management of these patients and to report adverse events associated with synthetic cannabinoids.

### BACKGROUND

The New York State Department of Health has been informed of a recent increase in synthetic cannabinoid-related adverse events and emergency department visits during this month, with over 160 individuals visiting health care facilities since April 8<sup>th</sup>. Reported cases were mostly in New York City and Syracuse.

Synthetic cannabinoids are marketed as "legal" and typically consist of plant material coated by chemicals which mimic THC, the active principle of marijuana. The products are sold as incense, herbal mixtures or potpourri, online and in convenience or smoke shops, and often carry a "not for human consumption" label in order to disguise the true purpose of the substance. Synthetic cannabinoids are often referred to by different names, including: K2, Spice, Blonde, Summit, Standard, Blaze, Red Dawn X, Citron, Green Giant, Smacked, Wicked

X, AK-47, synthetic marijuana, or legal marijuana. Additional names from some recent reported cases include: Geeked up, Ninja, Caution, Red Giant or Keisha Kole.

Healthcare providers should consider synthetic cannabinoids when evaluating patients who have compatible signs and symptoms. Signs and symptoms of synthetic cannabinoid use include agitation, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure, tremor, seizures, hallucinations, paranoia, and violent behavior. These effects can be similar to those of phencyclidine (PCP). It has been reported that several recent patients are also presenting with somnolence and bradycardia, some requiring endotracheal intubation. These effects can appear similar to those of clonidine. Synthetic cannabinoids are not detected by standard urine toxicology screens; therefore, synthetic cannabinoid exposure should not be ruled out based on negative screening results. Consult your laboratory for preferred testing methods.

Since the exact compounds contained in synthetic cannabinoid products change frequently, risks and adverse consequences are unpredictable. No antidote is presently available for synthetic cannabinoid intoxication; however, symptoms are usually short-lived and self-limited.

Health care providers should call the Poison Control Center (PCC) (1-800-222-1222) for guidance on the management of these patients and to report adverse events associated with synthetic cannabinoids.

Call 1-888-99-SALTS (1-888-997-2587) to report synthetic drug sale and distribution.