

# PRESS RELEASE

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## MARIJUANA VS. K2: SYNTHETIC DISASTER

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (February 13, 2013) – While many types of **illegal drug use continue to show a steady decline** of use by teens, **marijuana and synthetic cannabis (K2) have seen increases**. According to the Monitoring the Future survey, conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, the nation's 8th, 10th and 12th graders used marijuana and other synthetic cannabinoids at increasing rates between 2009-2011. During that same time, youth perception of potential harm decreased significantly between 8th and 12th grades.

From 2009-2011, smokable herbal blends marketed as being “legal” and providing a **marijuana-like high**, became increasingly popular, particularly among teens and young adults. These products are made of plant material that has been coated with **chemicals that mimic THC**, the active ingredient in marijuana, and are sold at a variety of retail outlets, in head shops and over the Internet. These chemicals, however, have **not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration** for human consumption, and there is no oversight of the manufacturing process. Brands such as “Spice,” “K2,” “Blaze” and “Red X Dawn” are labeled as ‘incense’ to mask their intended purpose. The Federal Drug Enforcement Agency continues to receive an **increasing number of reports** from poison centers, hospitals and law enforcement regarding incidents where synthetic cannabinoid products have been used.

In response to the increasing popularity and harmful effects of synthetic cannabinoids (K2), **fifteen states have already taken action to control one or more of these chemicals, including Michigan**. This creates a confusing message for young people as the State of Michigan “legalized marijuana” for certain medical purposes in 2008, and yet synthetic cannabinoids (often called “fake weed”) are being banned as a result of the risks to people's health and well being. As a teen, this can be difficult to understand because K2 (and other synthetic cannabinoids) were marketed as a legal replacement for marijuana.

As the truth about synthetic cannabinoids is uncovered, it is easy to see the similarities and differences in comparison to marijuana.

<b>SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS</b>	<b>MARIJUANA</b>
Unregulated mixture of chemical compounds	Same basic compound (THC)
Mixed/unpredictable symptoms	Well-known symptoms
Longer half-life (prolonged high)	Well-known duration
Reports of addiction/withdrawal	Less physically addictive
Not able to detect in blood or urine	Able to detect in blood or urine
Onset 5-10 minutes	Almost immediate onset
Severe hallucinations	No hallucinations
Intense paranoia	Little to no paranoia
Extreme anxiety	Lethargic
Rigid muscle tone	Normal muscle tone
Normal pupil size	Dilated pupils
Possible Horizontal/Vertical Gaze	No Horizontal/Vertical Gaze
Lack of Convergence	Lack of Convergence
Slight abnormal light reaction	Slight abnormal light reaction
Increased heart rate/BP	Increased heart rate/BP
Bloodshot/red eyes	Bloodshot/red eyes

In addition, smoking marijuana can:

- Produce the same lung damage and cancer risk as smoking five times as many nicotine cigarettes daily
- Impair critical skills related to attention, memory and learning (these deficits persist up to 24 hours after the user stopped feeling high)
- Create toxicity in unborn babies
- Lower levels of testosterone and increases the risk of defective or nonfunctional sperm in males

One important fact not mentioned above (and there is plenty of evidence to support it) is that **early use of marijuana, increases the likelihood of youth using illegal drugs in the future.** Overall, marijuana and synthetic cannabinoid use have negative consequences to an individual's health, the safety of the community and the health care system.

**More information:**

- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Kelsey Haynes at (517) 796-5133 or via email at [khaynes@uwjackson.org](mailto:khaynes@uwjackson.org)
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