



DRUG ALERT

IOWA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL POLICY

MAY 7, 2015

WARNINGS ISSUED ON REEMERGING SYNTHETIC DRUGS

The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) warned April 23 that a group of dangerous new synthetic cannabinoids have led to a dramatic spike in poison center exposure calls in the U.S.

From Jan. 1 through April 22, 2015, poison centers received 1,900 exposure calls from people seeking help for adverse reactions to these drugs, almost four times the rate of calls received in 2014. In New York, the Governor issued a health alert saying emergency departments reported seeing more than 160 patients in a nine day period. Alabama has saw 317 synthetic cannabinoid-related emergency department visits in an 18 day window as of April 20. Other states such as New Jersey, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arizona have also seen dramatic increases in reports, signaling a national problem.

Synthetic drugs likely are underreported in Iowa, because there is no requirement. Still, the Iowa Poison Control Center says after receiving only two synthetic drug exposure calls during the previous three months, in April alone it received 10 synthetic drug exposure calls, plus a report of one synthetic drug-related death of a teen.

Physicians can experience difficulty trying to determine the cause of severe medical problems seen in users when they present to emergency departments due to the wide variety of chemicals used to make these drugs.

"Synthetic drugs present a potentially fatal risk not well recognized by people consuming these products," said AAPCC President Jay Schauben, PharmD, DABAT, FAACT. "The recent death of five people suspected of using this category of drugs underscores the urgency of controlling these drugs and educating the public of their dangers."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and AAPCC have conducted public health surveillance using data stored in the National Poison Data System (NPDS) since 2000 to help identify and characterize emerging public health threats.

"We're greatly concerned by the rise in calls to poison centers regarding synthetic cannabinoids," said Dr. Amy Wolkin, chief of the CDC's Health Studies Branch. "The perception that these drugs are harmless is dangerous. People and hospitals need to be aware of the potential harm they can do."

"Our research shows that people are playing Russian Roulette with their lives because only the chemist creating the synthetic cannabinoid really knows what is in it," said Dr. Eric Wish, director of the Coordinating Center for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) located at the University of Maryland, College Park. "We have found very different metabolites in different sites across the country and even in the same site over time."



Health effects from the drug can be life-threatening and include:

- Severe agitation & anxiety
- Racing heartbeat & higher blood pressure
- Nausea & vomiting
- Muscle spasms, seizures & tremors
- Intense hallucinations & psychosis
- Suicidal & harmful thoughts or actions

OTHER SYNTHETIC DRUG NEWS

A synthetic cathinone called "flakka" (alpha-PVP) is surging in parts of the U.S. NIDA says vaporizing may lead to overdose. "Flakka," can cause a condition called "excited delirium" that involves extreme stimulation, paranoia and hallucinations that can lead to violent aggression and self-injury.



"The drug has been linked to deaths by suicide as well as heart attack. It can also dangerously raise body temperature and lead to kidney damage or failure," NIDA explains on its website: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/emerging-trends>.



IOWA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Pape State Office Building Phone: 515-725-0300
215 East 7th, Fifth Floor E-mail: dale.woolery@iowa.gov
Des Moines, IA 50319

WWW.IOWA.GOV/ODCP

Disclaimer: The information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only. The information is provided by ODCP and while we do everything possible to ensure accuracy, we make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability with respect to the information contained for any purpose. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk.