

Signs of Abuse of Fake Drugs

There is so much variation in the chemicals that are in fake drugs that recognizing the signs of abuse can be very difficult. Here are some things to look for:

- Changes in a youth's behavior, such as, irritability, agitation, a drop in grades, changes in friends, secretive behavior, or a decline in the relationships with his or her family;
- Frequenting stores where synthetic drugs are sold;
- Dried residue or ash in a youth's room;
- A strong clove smell;
- Smoking paraphernalia, such as, cigarette papers, pipes (objects such as a test-tube, tire gauge, or soda can with smoke residue on it), screens (objects to filter smoke, such as, steel wool), or a coffee grinder (used to grind product into a finer powder so it is easier to smoke).
- Frequent use of eye drops (to hide bloodshot eyes).
- Any of the symptoms listed under health risks.

It is important for parents and others working with youth to discuss with them the risks of using fake marijuana and fake cocaine. Even if they are sold legally, it does not mean that they are less dangerous than illegal drugs.

In a Poisoning Emergency

Call the local Poison Control Center at **1-800-222-1222**. They have experts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, that can help you decide if someone can be treated at home or whether he or she needs to go to the hospital.

Dial 911 immediately if someone:

- Stops breathing,
- Collapses, or
- Has a seizure.

This brochure was prepared by the Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County. It is provided as a general overview of the rules and laws on synthetic drugs in Florida. It does not apply to other states. It is not intended as a substitute for legal advice. It is always best to consult with an attorney about your legal rights and responsibilities in your particular case. Also, be aware that the laws of Florida are subject to change. This brochure was prepared based on 2012 Florida Statutes. It can be down-loaded from the internet at www.swfljac.org/fakedrugs.pdf.

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Synthetic or Fake Drugs



Information for parents and others working with youth about fake pot and "bath salts" (fake cocaine)

What Are Fake Drugs?

Fake drugs use man-made chemicals that mimic other drugs to try to get around drug laws.

Fake pot is typically a loose, dried plant material sold as either herbal incense or potpourri. The plant material is sprayed with chemicals to mimic the effects of THC, the main drug in marijuana. Individuals who abuse fake marijuana typically smoke it.

Fake cocaine is typically sold as “bath salts,” but it is also labeled sometimes as plant food, insect repellent, or stain remover. It is usually sold in the form of tablets, capsules, or a powder. “Bath salts” contain a chemical known as MDPV. “Bath salts” mimic the same high as methamphetamine or cocaine. They are usually crushed and then smoked, snorted, ingested or injected.

Fake drugs are usually marketed to teens and young adults under numerous names, such as, K-2 or Spice (fake marijuana), or Ivory Snow (a bath salt), but their names tend to change over time. They typically are sold in small packets, bottles, jars, or tubes. They are marked “not for human consumption” to avoid coming under FDA oversight, but they are intended to be used as drugs. Fake drugs are typically sold in some, but not all, convenience stores, gas stations, smoke shops, head shops, and on the internet.

Laws and Legal Consequences

Laws

Florida Statute 893.03 bans a long list of synthetic cannabinoids (marijuana-like) and cocaine-like substances, classifying them as “Schedule I” controlled substances. A Schedule I drug is one which has a high potential for abuse and has no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States and its use under medical supervision does not meet accepted safety standards. Federal statutes also ban many of the same substances found in Florida law. Federal law also bans substances that mimic the biochemical effect that cannabinoids have on the brain, which could include substances that have not been specifically listed in statute.

Legal Consequences

Under Florida law, possession of 3 grams or less of a Schedule I synthetic drug is a first degree misdemeanor, unless it is in powdered form.

Possession of more than 3 grams of a banned synthetic drug, sale, manufacture or delivery, or possession with intent to sell is a third degree felony.

Under federal statute, the offense of trafficking in synthetic drugs under Schedule I can result in up to 20 years in prison. A second conviction can result in up to 30 years in prison.

Health Risks

There is no oversight or regularity to the amount of chemicals sprayed on fake drug products, even from one batch to another in the same product. The products can be anywhere from 5 to 700 times more potent than the drugs that they imitate.

Fake Pot

Fake marijuana can cause nausea, vomiting, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, agitation, paranoia, hallucinations, a spike in blood pressure, increased sweating, a racing heart rate, seizures, an inability to speak, confusion, non-responsiveness, heart attack, and organ failure. Although there is not a lot known about the side effects for long term use because the drugs are so new, potential side effects reported have included cognitive difficulties, including memory loss as well as psychosis. Some youth can also become addicted to synthetic marijuana.

Fake Cocaine

For drug-laced bath salts, the active ingredient acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system. Side effects include hallucinations, severe paranoia, delusions, seizures, aggression, an increase in blood pressure, nausea, rapid heart rate, chest pain, irritability, dizziness, nosebleeds, and kidney failure. Bath salts have also been associated with impaired impulse control and violent behavior.