



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S.² Parent's Guide Lesson 5

Prescription Drug Abuse and Synthetic Street Drugs

This week we begin by asking the students if they are aware of a group of drugs called Synthetic Street Drugs.” The students have certainly heard of “SPICE”, “K2”, and “Bath Salts”, but don’t really know what they are. The officer provides information on the two newest types of synthetic drugs - K2/SPICE and Bath Salts, both of which are Schedule I drugs that have no accepted medical use and high potential for abuse and dependence. These dangerous, man-made drugs are made in places with no controls for safety or cleanliness. They are sold as “safe” products, “not for human consumption”, as novelty items. With no regulation or control over the manufacturing of these drugs, their chemical make-up is unknown. Since March 2011, it has been illegal to buy, possess, or sell these drugs.

K2/SPICE: These products are an increasingly popular *marijuana herbal replacement* and are sold in various "flavors" with the names SPICE, K2, Blaze, Red X Dawn, Arctic Spice, AM-2201, Spice Diamond, Spice Silver, Yucatan Fire, Genie, Zohai, PEP, and many, many other names promising different strengths, and “aromas.” **Not to be fooled.... this is not a spice product!** “SPICE” consists of a mixture of mostly unidentified herbal matter, sawdust or cardboard with ingredients written as dried flowers, leaves and aroma extracts. Smoking the drug can cause undesirable side effects on the heart, circulation, and nervous system. Emergency room physicians have reported that individuals using these types of products have experienced serious side effects which include: convulsions, anxiety attacks, dangerously elevated heart rates, increased blood pressure, vomiting, and disorientation. In addition, a “SPICE” high can cause what is called “couchlock” or the inability to move, persistent body numbness, lung irritation, severe and persistent headaches, blacking out, and blurred vision. There is very little known about the herbal concoction or the main chemical ingredients, a synthetic psychoactive substance chemically similar to delta9-THC, sprayed onto the mixture. However, what has been clearly recognized about this drug is that it is dangerous to the body and to the brain. This is a Schedule I drug and is illegal to buy, sell, or possess.

Bath Salts: Another dangerous new drug is being sold as *bath salts, insect repellent, spot remover, plant food* and *screen cleaner*. Again, **not to be fooled.... this is not any of the products it’s advertised as!** Using various marketing ploys to entice users, it is sending users to emergency rooms around the country after snorting, injecting, ingesting, or smoking it. “Bath Salts” (MDPV) have been sold under many names: Cloud 9, Ivory Wave, Ocean, Charge Plus, White Lightning, Scarface, Hurricane Charlie, Red Dove, Energy 1 and White Dove. Methylenedioxypropylvalerone (MDPV) is structurally related to *cathinone* (a Schedule I drug), an active alkaloid found in the khat plant which is a strong central nervous system (CNS) stimulant. Poison control centers have reported suicidal behavior, violence and aggression toward others, hallucinations, paranoia, and rapid heart rate as effects of using “Bath Salt” products. The duration of the effects is about 3 to 4 hours with the side effects continuing a total of 6 to 8 hours after administration. Larger doses of these chemicals will cause intense, prolonged panic attacks, severe vomiting and cold sweats. These chemicals cause intense cravings and repeated use can keep the user awake and paranoid for days (three days reported by one doctor). As mentioned they are sold as “bath salts,” et al, with the label indicating “for novelty use only” without any instructions for dosage. Products are sold in *100 mg to 500 mg packets* on Internet sites based in Europe. Even though these products are illegal in the United States, including Ohio, they can often be found for sale over the counter in stores promoting the use of

drugs. It takes about 5 mg or less per use to get high.

Schedule I Drugs: “Bath Salts” and “SPICE” are Schedule I drugs. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, the drugs and other substances that are considered controlled substances under the Controlled Substances Act are divided into five schedules. A controlled substance is placed in the schedule based on whether it has a currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States and its relative abuse potential and likelihood of causing dependence. Drugs listed in Schedule I have no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States and; therefore, they may not be prescribed, administered, or dispensed for medical use. They have a high potential for abuse and dependence. Some examples of substances listed in Schedule I are: heroin, LSD, marijuana, SPICE, Bath Salts, and ecstasy.

Our lesson shifts to a vital discussion about **Prescription Drugs**. Prescription drugs are classified as Schedule II, III, IV, or V, have accepted medical use, and may be prescribed, administered, or dispensed for medical use. Can prescription drugs be abused? Absolutely. During class we watch a video clip of 3 teens and the power of addiction to prescription drugs as well as some of the very real consequences that youth may face. The 3 teens in the video had started experimenting with Rx drugs at the ages of 11-12 years old. Just a few years later, they were facing addiction, overdose, legal problems, being kicked out of college, and suicide attempts. None of these teens planned to become addicted, nor did they have any idea of the possible impact that abusing Rx drugs could or would have on their lives.

So How Big is the Prescription Drug Abuse Problem? The epidemic of overdose deaths from prescription painkillers started in Appalachia, spreading from coast to coast. Prescription drug overdoses are killing more people than car accidents, homicides, and suicides combined. In recent years, the number of drug overdoses in the U.S. rose from about 11,000 in 1999 to almost 27,000 in 2007¹. The CDC attributes the 62.5% rise in drug overdose deaths between 1999 and 2004 to a higher use of prescription painkillers and prescription sedatives. Although drug overdose deaths are historically associated with urban areas, the latest figures from the CDC show the greatest increases in rural areas between 1999 and 2004. The dramatic increase in drug overdose deaths is not driven by illegal drug use in the inner cities; it is being fueled by prescription drug abuse in white, middle-class, rural America². By 2007, more teenagers used opioid analgesics recreationally than used marijuana.³ Among youth 12-13 years (*not including Tobacco and Alcohol*) **prescription-type drugs** rank as the #1 drug of choice (2%), followed by Inhalants (1.2%), and then Marijuana (0.9%). In the 14-15 year age group Marijuana becomes the #1 drug of choice (5.8%), followed by **Prescription-type drugs** (3.1%), and then Inhalants (1.7%).

Here are the reasons why kids say they take Rx meds illegally:

1. 62% - easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets.
2. 35% - safer to use than illegal drugs.
3. 33% - there is less shame attached to using Rx meds.
4. 31% - nothing wrong with using Rx meds without a doctor's prescription.
5. 29% - prescription pain relievers are not addictive (*wrong!!!!*).

Common sense tells us that abusing any of these drugs would be stupid, but do youth see the use of some of these substances as harmful or abusive? Your child may be experiencing pressure regarding the use of these drugs. Where will he/she get the correct information and support they need to protect them from the potential risks of falling victim to the pressure if not from you? We really need to have conversation with our children about the dangers and harmful effects of abusing prescription drugs!

Homework this week: Personal Risks of Drug Use

The assignment this week takes a look at the effects that drug use can have on health, family and other relationships. Drug use certainly impacts the individual using the drug, but it also has tremendous negative impact on those involved in the life of the user. Please note that the last question on the homework is an opportunity for you to share with your son/daughter what you see as possible risks to them if drugs were used.

1 Centers for Disease Control. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. February 9, 2012 / 56(05):93-96

2 Centers for Disease Control. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. February 9, 2007 / 56(05):93-96

3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Administration, Office of Applied Studies; 2007. Report No.: DHHS pub. no. SMA 07-4293.