



# LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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## “**SPICE**” a Herbal high

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According to an article in the Jacksonville Daily News reported January 24, 2010 a new herbal concoction is now being abused in the U.S. **SPICE** as it is called has been an issue in Germany, Austria, and France for the past 4 years where it is was banned in 2009, and in the United Kingdom where it will soon be banned. It was first imported from China in 2006 where batches were seized in Sweden, Switzerland.



**SPICE** is an increasingly popular marijuana herbal replacement. There is very little known about the herbal concoction or the main chemical ingredient JWH-018 (*1-Pentyl-3-(1-naphthoyl)indole*), a synthetic psychoactive substance chemically similar to THC, sprayed onto the mixture<sup>1</sup>. It is sold on the internet and in “head shops” as a legal high and nicotine-free smoke. Although it purports to be an entirely natural mix of herbs and plants including Baybean and vanilla, the marijuana-type high that users get from Spice comes from a synthetic cannabinoid four or five times as potent as delta9-THC. The smoking mixture costs \$39 - \$49 for a 3gram pouch, contains mostly unidentified herbal matter with ingredients such as dried flowers, leaves and aroma extracts listed on the packet. It is sold in various “flavors” with the names K2, Arctic Spice, Spice Diamond, Spice Silver, Yucatan Fire, Genie, Zohai and PEP promising different strengths.

Professor Leslie Iversen, chairman of the technical committee of the UK government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) stated “It's a very clever product, sold as a herbal smoking mixture from China, but containing chemicals which can be a lot more potent than cannabis. Users have no idea what they are taking. As a result they are running a considerable risk of overdosing, which is not only unpleasant, but potentially quite dangerous.” There is no data on the drug's toxicity or how long it stays in the body. In mice, it can lead to a lower body temperature, partial paralysis and the temporary inability to feel pain, according to the DEA.

Here are some things to look for: Smoking the drug can cause undesirable side effects on the heart, circulation, and nervous system. A **SPICE** high can cause what is called “couchlock” or the inability to move. Other risks include: persistent body numbness, lung irritation, high blood pressure, severe and persistent headaches, blacking out, blurred vision, and anxiety.<sup>2</sup> One account written by a student explained his reaction to smoking Spice. *“I inhaled the spicy smoke into my lungs and blew it out. It tasted awful. Two minutes later, my head was spinning, I couldn't move, I was sweating profusely, I had this feeling of impending doom, waves of nausea hit me and I got sick in front of a dozen people. I felt ill for hours.”* Users tend to smoke Spice in joints with a bit of tobacco, as smokers do with cannabis.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35444158/ns/health-addictions/from/ET> - “Fake Pot that Acts Real Stymies Law Enforcement”

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs\\_concern/spice/spice\\_jwh018.htm](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/spice/spice_jwh018.htm)

Even though Spice is sold as a *legal* smoking mixture containing chemicals that mimic effects of cannabis the Federal Analog Act is quite clear that it is **NOT legal to use, possess or purchase** in the U.S. The Federal Analog Act, 21 U.S.C. § 813, is a controversial section of the United States Controlled Substances Act, allowing any chemical "substantially similar" to an illegal drug (in Schedule I or II) to be treated as if it were also in Schedule I or II, but only if it is intended for human consumption<sup>3</sup>. Marijuana being a Schedule I drug and Spice's chemical JWH-018 reacting "similar" to Marijuana places Spice in the category of an illegal substance.

A clinical report from Dresden supports the impression that "Spice Gold" is strongly addictive. In the current edition of *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, Ulrich S. Zimmermann, from Dresden Technical University, and his colleagues describe a young man who developed physical withdrawal symptoms after regular consumption of this designer drug, accompanied by a dependence syndrome.<sup>4</sup> When he came to the hospital, the patient had been consuming "Spice Gold" daily for eight months. Because of the loss of activity, he had rapidly increased the daily dose from 1 g to 3 g. He felt continuous craving for the drug and this caused him to carry on consuming it, in spite of the cognitive impairment it caused him. This led him to neglect his duties at his workplace and he was now threatened with unemployment.

He had already been forced to be abstinent for a time, because of a bottleneck in supplies, and this had triggered typical withdrawal symptoms, such as internal unrest, tremor, palpitations, headache, nausea, vomiting, depression and desperation. These symptoms had abruptly disappeared when he started consuming spice once again. He suffered similar symptoms during drug withdrawal in hospital. The authors interpret the symptoms as indicating a typical withdrawal disease, very probably due to the admixture of synthetic cannabinomimetics.

If you have any questions please contact Lake County Narcotics Agency  
Community Drug Education Supervisor, Officer Willis: (440) 350-3302



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<sup>3</sup> Section 21 U.S.C. §802(32)(A) - <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/21cfr/21usc/802.htm#32a>

<sup>4</sup> ScienceDaily (July 10, 2009)