

# SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS (K2/SPICE) UNPREDICTABLE DANGER

K2/SPICE IS **NOT** MARIJUANA

It's often called *synthetic marijuana* or *fake weed* because some of its chemicals are like those in marijuana. The effects can be unpredictable and in some cases, severe or even life-threatening.



Shredded, dried  
plant material

+



Man-made  
chemicals

=



A "natural" drug?  
**Not even close.**



For more information, visit:

[drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/synthetic-cannabinoids](https://drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/synthetic-cannabinoids)

# Spice

**Also known as:** Black Mamba, Bliss, Bombay Blue, Fake Weed, Genie, K2, Yucatan Fire, and Zohai

## What is Spice?

Image



Spice is a mix of herbs (shredded plant material) and laboratory-made chemicals with mind-altering effects. It is often called “synthetic marijuana” or “fake weed” because some of the chemicals in it are similar to ones in marijuana. But, its effects are sometimes very different from marijuana, and often much stronger. Usually the chemicals are sprayed onto plant materials to make them look like marijuana.

Because the chemicals used in Spice have a high potential for abuse and no medical benefit, the Drug Enforcement Administration has made many of the active chemicals found in Spice illegal. However, the people who make these products try to avoid these laws by using different chemicals in their mixtures. Spice is most often labeled “not for human consumption” and disguised as incense. Sellers of the drug try to lead people to believe it is “natural” and therefore harmless, but it is neither. In fact, the actual effects of spice can be unpredictable and, in some cases, severe or cause death.

## **How Spice is Used**

Most people smoke Spice by rolling it in papers (like with marijuana or handmade tobacco cigarettes); sometimes, it is mixed with marijuana. Some people also make it as an herbal tea for drinking. Others buy Spice products as liquids to use in e-cigarettes

## **What happens to your brain when you use Spice?**

Spice has only been around a few years, and research is only just beginning to measure how it affects the brain. What is known is that the chemicals found in Spice attach to the same nerve cell receptors as THC, the main mind-altering ingredient in marijuana. Some of the chemicals in Spice, however, attach to those receptors more strongly than THC, which could lead to much stronger effects. The resulting health effects can be unpredictable and dangerous. Additionally, there are many chemicals that remain unidentified in products sold as Spice and it is therefore not clear how they may affect the user. It is important to remember that chemicals are often being changed as the makers of Spice often alter them to avoid drug laws, which have to target certain chemicals.

## **What happens to your body when you use Spice?**

### **Short-Term Effects**

People who use synthetic cannabinoid report some effects similar to those produced by marijuana:

- relaxation
- elevated mood
- altered perception (changes in awareness of objects and conditions)
- psychosis (feeling detached from reality)

People who have had bad reactions to Spice report symptoms like:

- fast heart rate
- throwing up
- extreme anxiety or nervousness
- hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there)
- feeling confused

- violent behavior
- suicidal thoughts

In a few cases, it has been linked with heart attacks and death.

We still do not know all the ways Spice may affect a person's health or how toxic it may be, but it is possible that there may be harmful heavy metal residues in Spice mixtures.

## Is Spice addictive?

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Yes, Spice can be addictive. People who use Spice a lot may have **withdrawal** symptoms if they try to quit. This means they can't stop using it even when they really want to and even after it causes terrible consequences to their health and other parts of their lives. Withdrawal symptoms can include:

- headaches
- anxiety
- depression
- irritability