

## **What is "Herbal Incense"?**

The term herbal incense is used to describe a variety of products marketed under many names, including K2, Spice, Head Trip and Apocalypse and others. These products contain dried, shredded plant material and are treated with [synthetic cannabinoids](#) that are responsible for their psychoactive (mind-altering) effects. Herbal incense products are labeled "not for human consumption" in order to evade U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines intended to regulate foods and medicines. They are marketed to individuals who are interested in herbal alternatives to marijuana (cannabis). Unlike traditional incense products that are commonly sold in the form of cones or sticks, herbal incense products resemble potpourri. Although many herbal incense users report experiences similar to those produced by marijuana, adverse psychological and physical effects are increasingly being identified by users themselves as well as law enforcement agencies and healthcare professionals.

Herbal incense mixtures are sold in many locations, including "head" or "smoke" shops, gas stations, and via the Internet. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) banned five synthetic cannabinoids as of January 1, 2011 by placing them in [Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act](#), manufacturers have simply [replaced the five substances with those that are still legal](#). This easy access has likely contributed to the popularity of herbal incense.

## **What are the Effects of "herbal incense"?**

Although reports concerning herbal incense products are increasingly being published in medical journals, there are currently no formal studies on the effects of these substances on human health or behavior. A variety of mood and perceptual effects have been described, and calls to members of the American Association of Poison Control Centers [have risen from 59 in 2009 to 6,955 in 2011](#). Reported effects include marijuana-like intoxication, but also rapid heart rate, severe anxiety attacks, confusion and transient psychotic episodes. Suicides and homicides have also been linked to the use of herbal incense, but the details of these cases remain fuzzy.