

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2014

Contact: Communications Office
(850) 245-4111

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EMPHASIZES THE HEALTH RISKS OF USING ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health urges all residents and visitors to consider the health risks of using illegal synthetic drugs. Taken to achieve the high associated with drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine, these synthetic substitutes are life-threatening and addictive. Within the past week, up to 30 individuals in Alachua County became severely ill after using such substances.

“As we have seen recently in Gainesville, these illicit synthetic drugs are dangerous to Florida’s children, adults, families and visitors,” said Dr. John Armstrong, State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health. “These drugs destroy lives and threaten public health and safety.”

Synthetic marijuana, often known as “K2” or “Spice,” is one of the substances whose popularity is “alarmingly high,” according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Labels on Spice products often claim that they contain “natural” psycho-active material taken from a variety of plants. Spice products do contain dried plant material, but chemical analyses show their active ingredients are *synthetic* cannabinoid compounds.

The adverse effects of synthetic marijuana use may include agitation, extreme nervousness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, a racing heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, tremors and seizures, hallucinations and dilated pupils. Spice may also raise blood pressure and cause reduced blood supply to the heart. In a few cases, it has been associated with heart attacks. Regular users may experience withdrawal and addiction symptoms.

Anyone experiencing an adverse reaction to an illicit synthetic substance should contact their local poison center as soon as possible by calling 1-800-222-1222. If there is a life-threatening situation call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

###