

**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**

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**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WARNS OF HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ILLICIT SYNTHETIC DRUGS**

**Tallahassee**—The Florida Department of Health (DOH) is warning the public about the health risks associated with illicit synthetic substances. Often used to achieve the same high typically produced by drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, and amphetamines, illicit synthetic substances are life-threatening and addictive.

“Illicit synthetic drugs are dangerous to Florida’s children, adults and families,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “These drugs destroy lives, and are threats to public health and safety.”

The number of people using illicit synthetic drugs is growing in Florida. The American Association of Poison Control Centers reported that in 2012 Florida poison control centers received 5,202 calls involving exposures to illicit synthetic substances, a considerable spike compared to 2,906 calls in 2010.

Synthetic marijuana, often known as “K2” or “Spice,” is one of the substances whose popularity is “alarmingly high,” as noted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. According to the 2011 Monitoring the Future survey of drug-use trends among youth, 11.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders used K2 or Spice in the past year, ranking it the second most common illicit drug used by that age group. Often sold as incense and falsely marketed as “natural,” labels of Spice claim the product contains a psycho-active material taken from plants. Chemical analyses actually reveal that the active ingredients are instead *synthetic* cannabinoid compounds. Because these chemicals are considered to have high potential for abuse and no medical benefit, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) designated its five active chemicals as Schedule I controlled substances, making them illegal to sell, buy, or process.

Anyone experiencing an adverse reaction to an illicit synthetic substance should contact their local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

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