

HERBAL INCENSE: THE NEW DANGER



The recent popularity of herbal incense is not due to a revived interest in aromatherapy; rather, it's the substance's marijuana-like effect and felony-free status that has brought on its recent attention. The product, also known as "Serenity Now," "Spice" and "K2" among others (see page two for an extended list), is a mixture of herbs and spices and is sprayed with a synthetic compound chemically similar to THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.

The key ingredients in these incense products are believed to be the unintended result of scientific research on marijuana's effects. Dr. John Huffman, a Clemson

University organic chemistry professor, was researching the effects of cannabinoids on the brain. His work resulted in a 1995 paper that contained the method and ingredients used to make the compound. That recipe found its way to marijuana users, who replicated Huffman's work and began spraying it onto dried flowers, herbs and tobacco.

Users roll it up or inhale it from pipes. It reportedly produces effects similar to marijuana - a sort of mellow high, only more potent and shorter-acting, though it is also reported to produce hallucinations. Others have described it as a paranoid high that comes with hallucinations, some of them "scary." Because herbal incense is not detectable on standard drug screens, some users will smoke it in a separate pipe to ensure it doesn't mingle with residue from other drugs that would be detected.

Herbal incense cannot be detected on typical drug tests because those test for THC, the chemical in marijuana that federal law deems an illegal drug.

(continued on next page)

Side Effects Can Include:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Pale skin
- Elevated heart rate
- Agitation
- Seizures

For more information and a tailored drug testing quote for your business,
contact Safety First at 800-245-1150.

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Common Names for Herbal Incense:

Spice
K2
K2 Spice
K2 Summit
K2 Weed
Premium Blend K2
Serenity Now
Spice Gold
Black Mamba Spice
Synthetic Marijuana
Legal Herb
Legal Weed
Synthetic THC
JWH-018
Dark Night
Mojo

Only a costly, detailed analysis can detect that a combination of three chemicals, including the compound JWH-018, is what gives smokers the marijuana-like high. The DEA has included that specific combination in their list of controlled substances, but only the costly analysis in a lab will find it. DEA officials say the problem is that manufacturers keep changing the chemicals used to mimic THC, and each combination would have to be both outlawed and affordably traceable in order to enforce a ban on herbal incense.

For now it can be found in gas stations, convenience stores, smoke shops, herb shops or “head” shops, health food stores and online. It looks like potpourri and is available in scents like blueberry, spearmint and vanilla honey. It can be sold to anyone - even minors. A 3-gram packet can cost between \$20 and \$60 - similar to the street price of marijuana but with the key advantage of being legal.

Your EAP Benefit

Your Employee Assistance Program is a company-sponsored benefit that is free and completely confidential. If you or someone you know is suffering from a substance abuse issue, contact your EAP at 800-245-1150. A Care Coordinator will talk with you about scheduling an appointment for an assessment or treatment and other support options. You may also visit www.behavioralhealthsystems.com for more information.

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