Synthetic Cannabinoids (K2)
Frequently Asked Questions for Consumers

What are synthetic cannabinoids (K2)?
Synthetic cannabinoids are a class of compounds designed to mimic the action of 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive constituent of marijuana. But, K2 is not marijuana. Many different synthetic cannabinoids can be manufactured. The chemicals involved can cause unpredictable and dangerous effects, detailed below.

How is K2 packaged?
It is sold as incense, herbal mixtures, or potpourri with a variety of names including, but not limited to “Spice,” “Mr. Nice Guy,” and “Green Giant.” It often carries a warning that the products are “not for human consumption.” An expanded list of product names can be found on the next page.

What are the dangerous effects of K2 use?
The most common adverse effects that have been reported include lethargy, confusion, drowsiness, respiratory depression, nausea and vomiting, tachycardia (increased heart rate), paranoid behavior, agitation, irritability, headache, seizures, and syncope (loss of consciousness). Severe side effects may include acute renal failure and significant negative effects to the cardiovascular and central nervous systems. In rare instances, use of synthetic cannabinoids has been linked to death.

What is the legal status of K2 in New York State?
It is illegal in New York State to possess, sell, offer to sell, or manufacture synthetic cannabinoids. Stores in possession of synthetic cannabinoids can be fined $250 per packet. Additionally, continuing or repeat violation may result in closure of the retail establishment and entities and persons who have been ordered by the DOHMH to stop selling synthetic cannabinoids risk additional civil and criminal penalties if found to have them.

Who has experienced negative health consequences?
In New York City, males account for 90% of K2-related emergency department visits. Patients have a median age of 37 and 99% of the patients are age 18 or older.
Why the concern?
There has been a rapid and significant increase in K2-related emergency department visits in New York City. These substances have the potential to be extremely harmful due to their severe adverse effects and a mistaken belief that they are a safe, legal alternative to marijuana.

How may I contact the Poison Control Center?
The Poison Control Center can be reached at (800) 222-1222 or by calling 311.

How can I report a store that is selling these products in New York City?
Call 311 to report retailers that are still selling these products.

Names under which these products are being sold include, but are not limited to:

AK-47
Alice in Wonderland
Amped
Aroma
Atomic
Bath Salts
Bernie
Bizarro
Black Giant
Black Mamba
Bliss Plant Feeder
California Dreams
Caution
Cherry Blast
Chill X
Chronic Spice
Dafuq
Darkness
Demon
Diablo
Diesel
Dream Burner
Earth Impact
Extreme
Extreme Aroma Therapy
Fake Weed
Fire
Flame
Flamingo
Frog(e)