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## Fake Marijuana Spurs More than 3,000 Calls to U.S. Poison Centers

**Alexandria, Va.** - Synthetic marijuana products being sold at gas stations, convenience stores and "head shops" have spurred more than 4,000 calls to U.S. poison centers since 2010, causing increased concern among doctors and clinicians as well as state lawmakers, who are quickly moving to outlaw such products.

Synthetic marijuana, marketed under product names including "Spice," "K2," "Genie," "Yucatan Fire," "Sence," "Smoke," "Skunk," and "Zohai," has spurred callers to poison centers from across the country. In 2010, poison centers reported 2,874 calls about the products, according to the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS). As of March 28, poison centers reported 1,246 calls for 2011.

"These products present a health risk that is not worth it for consumers," said Missouri Poison Center Medical Director Anthony J. Scalzo, MD, who first noticed increased calls about these products to his center last fall. "The products are meant to create a similar reaction to marijuana, but in fact, patients often report the opposite – a fast, racing heartbeat, elevated blood pressure and nausea."

These products are typically marketed as incense or potpourri and have been sold since 2006 for about \$30 to \$40 per three-gram bag. Scalzo said parents should be on the lookout for what looks like incense in their child's room and watch to see if their children seem more anxious than usual. "Statistics from NPDS show that this is an emerging phenomenon," said Alvin C. Bronstein, MD, acting director of toxicosurveillance for the American Association of Poison Control Centers. "The symptoms can be life-threatening."

Jim Hirt, executive director of the American Association of Poison Control Centers, said those with questions about synthetic marijuana should call their local poison center.

"Poison centers are staffed with medical professionals who are trained to know how to treat a poison exposure, including an exposure to synthetic marijuana," he said. "Poison centers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to answer questions about any substance that could be harmful to your health. "

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation's poison control centers. Poison centers offer free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For questions about poison or poison prevention, call your local poison center at 1 (800) 222-1222.