



# PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

Issued: May 23, 2018 For: Washington State Hospital Emergency Departments & Public Health Departments

Media Requests, contact: Jennifer Monteleone, [jmonteleone@wapc.org](mailto:jmonteleone@wapc.org), 206-517-2367

## Synthetic Cannabinoids Contaminated with Anticoagulant Rat Poison

The CDC, along with many Health Departments and Poison Control Centers nationwide, are actively investigating more than 160 cases of severe bleeding and coagulopathy among people who have used synthetic cannabinoids. The first case was reported in Illinois on March 10, 2018. At least 9 states have reported cases, with at least 3 fatalities. **To date, no cases have been reported in Washington State.**

The synthetic cannabinoids, also known as **Spice, K2, AK-47** and other street names, are man-made recreational chemicals sprayed onto dried plant material for smoking, and also available in liquid form to vaporize in e-cigarette type devices. Products may be contaminated with brodifacoum, a vitamin K antagonist anticoagulant used in rat and mice poisons. Reports show individuals have obtained the contaminated products from convenience stores, dealers and friends.

### What are the clinical signs of coagulopathy?

- Patients may present with clinical signs of bleeding or may have laboratory coagulopathy (elevated INR without clinical signs).
- Clinical signs include: bruising, nosebleeds, bleeding of the gums, blood in the urine or stool, excessive bleeding from cuts and wounds, hematemesis, heavy menstrual bleeding, back or flank pain, altered mental status, feeling faint or fainting, loss of consciousness, and collapse.

### What should healthcare providers do to assess and treat a brodifacoum exposure?

Healthcare providers should be vigilant for vitamin K antagonist coagulopathy in patients with a history of synthetic cannabinoid use and elicit a history of its use in patients presenting with coagulopathy of undetermined etiology.

1. Ask all patients about history of illicit drug use, especially those with a history of synthetic cannabinoid use.
2. High risk patients (e.g. who report using synthetic cannabinoids) should be screened for vitamin K antagonist coagulopathy by checking INR.
3. Patients with active bleeding may require treatment with vitamin K and/or blood products. Vitamin K therapy may be required for several weeks. Oral vitamin K is costly.
4. Contact the Washington Poison Center at: 1-800-222-1222, for any questions regarding specific diagnostic testing and management of these patients.
5. Patients with coagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoid use might have friends or associates who have used the same product; these individuals may also be at risk.

The Washington Poison Center strongly encourages anyone who has purchased a product like Spice, K2, AK-47 or Synthetic Marijuana **NOT TO USE IT**, as it may contain brodifacoum, a rat poison that causes severe bleeding, which can be fatal.

**Questions, contact the Washington Poison Center, 24/7/365, at: 1-800-222-1222.**