

Synthetic pot linked to kidney injury

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Researchers report on two studies that showed kidney damage in those who used the drug.

(HealthDay)—New research suggests that synthetic marijuana, also known as K2 or Spice, might harm the kidneys.

"Use and abuse of these products have been tied to acute [kidney injury](#) in patients across the country," Kerry Willis, chief scientific officer of the National Kidney Foundation, said in a news release from the foundation. "Despite being legal and marketed as safe, it appears these products are far from it."

According to the foundation, [synthetic marijuana](#) products can be found online and at shops—often sold as bath additives, incense and air fresheners—but they are comprised of herbal plant material that has been sprayed with chemicals that mimic Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the principal component of natural marijuana.

"Common side effects in patients abusing these agents include [rapid heart rate](#), vomiting, agitation, seizures and hallucinations," Dr. Manuel Fernandez Palmer, of Methodist Dallas Health Center, said in the news release. "Theories suggest that the compounds may have harmful heavy metal residues, as these are known to affect different parts of the body, including the kidneys."

Fernandez Palmer presented one of two recent studies linking use of the drugs to [kidney damage](#) at the National Kidney Foundation meeting in Dallas last week. The data and conclusions of research presented at meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"While there is no definitive proof that synthetic cannabinoids were the cause of the kidney injury, these observational studies strongly support that there is a correlation between the two," Fernandez Palmer said.

"Our work should help strengthen the case that these agents should be recognized by the medical community as a possible cause of reversible [acute kidney injury](#), and that further testing should be made on the different effects that these substances produce on the body," he added.

More information: For more about synthetic marijuana, visit the [U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse](#).

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