



Office of the Ombudsman

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to the MA Department of Correction

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*for*Health[™]
CONSULTING

at UMass Chan
Medical School

PRESENTS

New Generation of Drugs: K2 one of the Synthetic Cannabinoids

Presented to:



Presented by:

Office of the Ombudsman

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Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. **Define** K2 Synthetic Cannabinoids.
2. **Identify** signs & symptoms of K2 and other synthetic drugs.
3. **Describe** methods to reduce risk of synthetic drugs entering correctional facilities.
4. **Explain** strategies to minimize the risk of contamination to staff.

K2 is a Prison Problem

Drug Epidemic Facing Corrections Facilities

600%

Increase in prison overdose deaths since 2001.*

85%

Inmates with substance use disorder or related crime according to NIH.

2M

Incarcerated persons receive millions of mail items every year.

2mg

Deadly dose of fentanyl
New variants also
resistant to Naloxone
(Narcan).

Prison employee dies after exposure to mail 'saturated' in substance

12 August 2024

BBC

3 Bureau of Prisons employees hospitalized over drug-laced prisoner mail

One prison employee was hospitalized on Friday.

By [Luke Barr](#)

Apr 179, 2022, 12:59 PM



Two corrections officers sickened by fentanyl sent in mail to Oneida County Jail

By Jeanne Tyler, Moodle Lockman | Thursday, January 17th 2022

Mother of man who fatally overdosed at Nassau jail files \$20 million wrongful death lawsuit

^a<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1186001/>; ^b<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0292060>; ^c<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmb.2021.107600>

Drug-Laced Paper Becoming More Sophisticated

Liquid Narcotics Printed onto Paper.

Emerging Trend in Treated Paper Smuggling Methods

- Liquid drugs can replace up to 80% of ink
- Inexpensive and easy with over-the-counter chemicals
- Often printing on actual court documentation
- Increased detection difficulty, harder to discern from regular paper by visual inspection

Examples of Ink Laced with Formaldehyde



Kits Commonly Available at Low Cost



What is K2?

- **Definition:** Chemicals synthesized to mimic the effects of other drugs, both prescribed and illicit.
- **Properties:**
 - K2 is a synthetic cannabinoids that mimic the effects of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana.
 - Synthetic cannabinoids often have more side effects than THC and may have a longer duration of action.
- **Prevalence:** Commonly used in jails and prisons.
- **Another Similar Drug:** Another synthetic cannabinoid in the same class is “Spice”.
- **Marketing:** Often sold under the guise of “herbal incense” or “potpourri” on the streets or in the communities.
- **Composition:** No standard for how it is mixed or what it is mixed with.

What Does K2 Use Look Like?

- **Physical Symptoms may include:**

- Tachycardia (elevated heart rate).
- Elevated blood pressure.
- Tremors or shaking.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Numbness and tingling of hands, feet or face.

- **Psychological Symptoms may include:**

- Hallucinations.
- Agitation.
- Anxiety.

What Can a K2 Overdose Look Like?

- Out of control behavior.
- Self injury or aggression toward others.
- Confusion and hallucinations.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Seizures.
- Coma.
- Organ failure.
- Death.

What Does the Drug K2 Look Like?

- **Form:**

- K2 typically starts as bulk powder, which is dissolved in solvents, such as acetone.
- The solution is then applied to dry plant material or paper.

- **Common Usage:**

- K2 is often applied to paper or soaked in a K2 liquid to absorb the drug.
- Papers entering prisons may have been soaked in K2 and then dried, making them difficult to detect.
- K2 can be smoked.

Long-Term Effects of K2:

- **Addiction and dependence.**
- **Mental Health Effects:**
 - Acute psychotic episodes.
 - Paranoia.
- **Physical Health Effects:**
 - Organ damage.

Why is K2 So Popular in Prison?

- **“K2 Jail Paper”:**

- A term used to describe paper laced with the synthetic drug being called K2 (which may be a “K2” like drug and mix of things)

- **Access Methods:**

- K2 is often brought into the facilities by family, friends, lawyers or staff.
- The drug is applied to letters, legal papers, children’s drawings, religious documents, or other types of paper.

- **Usage and Value:**

- The paper is torn into stamp-sized pieces, which can be smoked or ingested to ‘get high’.
- These pieces are sold for significant amounts of money within prisons.

K2 Financial Facts

- **Cost:**

- K2 is cheaper than many other drugs of abuse.

- **Access:**

- Easy to be brought into prisons using everyday paper.

- **Profitability:**

- A stamp-sized dose can sell for over a hundred dollars.

- **Payment Methods:**

- Payments for the drug are often processed by family or friends of incarcerated individuals.



Tik Tok is full of people showing how to make K2 Jail Paper. It is really simple and shows why it is so popular in the jails. It's cheap, easy to make and easy to smuggle.

The composition of “Prison” K2 and its additives is not consistent and may enhance the danger of the drug. It can be laced with substances like fentanyl and other potent drugs and chemicals, including rat poison. These additives could lead to overdose and death!

K2 and the Risk to Staff

- **Exposure Risks:**

- Staff can be affected by K2 through touching it, inhaling it, or ongoing exposure to second-hand smoke.

- **Immediate Symptoms:**

- K2 exposure may cause lightheadedness, nausea, or loss of consciousness.

- **Long-Term Effects:**

- Prolonged exposure to K2 can lead to chronic symptoms, such as persistent headaches.

- **Behavioral Risks:**

- Individuals under the influence of K2 may become combative, out of control, or aggressive, posing a safety risk to staff and others.

How to Stop the Flow of K2 into Prisons and Jails

- **It is illegal to introduce contraband such as K2 into the facility.**
- **Mail Policies:**
 - In 2018, the Department of Correction began withholding original copies of incoming mail, except for legal mail, and providing photocopies to prevent drug laced papers.
 - In May 2024, DOC required attorneys to register and place certified sticker on all mail sent to their clients.
- **Limit Paper Entry:**
 - Limit all paper brought into the facility by family, friends, attorneys and staff.
- **Monitor for Signs of K2:**
 - Be vigilant for signs of K2 use and presence on the units.

What Else Can Be Done to Stop the K2 crisis?

- **Search and Seizure:**

- Conduct searches and seize papers of concern in housing units.
- Staff should wear masks and gloves during searches to prevent exposure or contact with the drug.
- Staff should follow the DOC policy for all unknown substances.

- **Testing and Screening:**

- Implement drug testing at labs and develop effective screening methods.

- **Drug Treatment Programs:**

- Provide drug treatment programs for incarcerated individuals known to be using or addicted.

- **Emergency Response:**

- While there is no antidote for synthetic cannabinoids, Narcan may be effective if the K2 is laced with fentanyl or another opioid.

Information sources:

<https://908devices.com/correctional-facilities/>

The Boston Globe: "There's a real pandemic: Illegal drug known as K2 prevalent across Mass Prisons"

Webinar: Substance Identification in Corrections

Keith Graves: The K2 Jail Paper Dilemma: Understanding the Impact on Inmates and Staff

NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) TO 103 DOC 525,
INMATE SUBSTANCE USE MONITORING AND TESTING
UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE RESPONSE