

# HOW SPICE CAN IMPACT THE BODY



## BRAIN:

Many perceive that Spice impact the brain much like marijuana, while others report it causing much more powerful impairment of the brain, including seizures. What is clear is that Spice alters each user's brain and perception differently in the moment – from slightly to dramatically – and no one yet knows the long-term effects that the use of Spice can have on a brain.



## MOOD:

Spice users often say that the substance elevates their moods from calming to confusion to paranoia to hallucination, which can create dangerous situations for users and those around them. There are many reports of users becoming aggressive, causing violent or psychotic episodes against others, and even committing suicide.



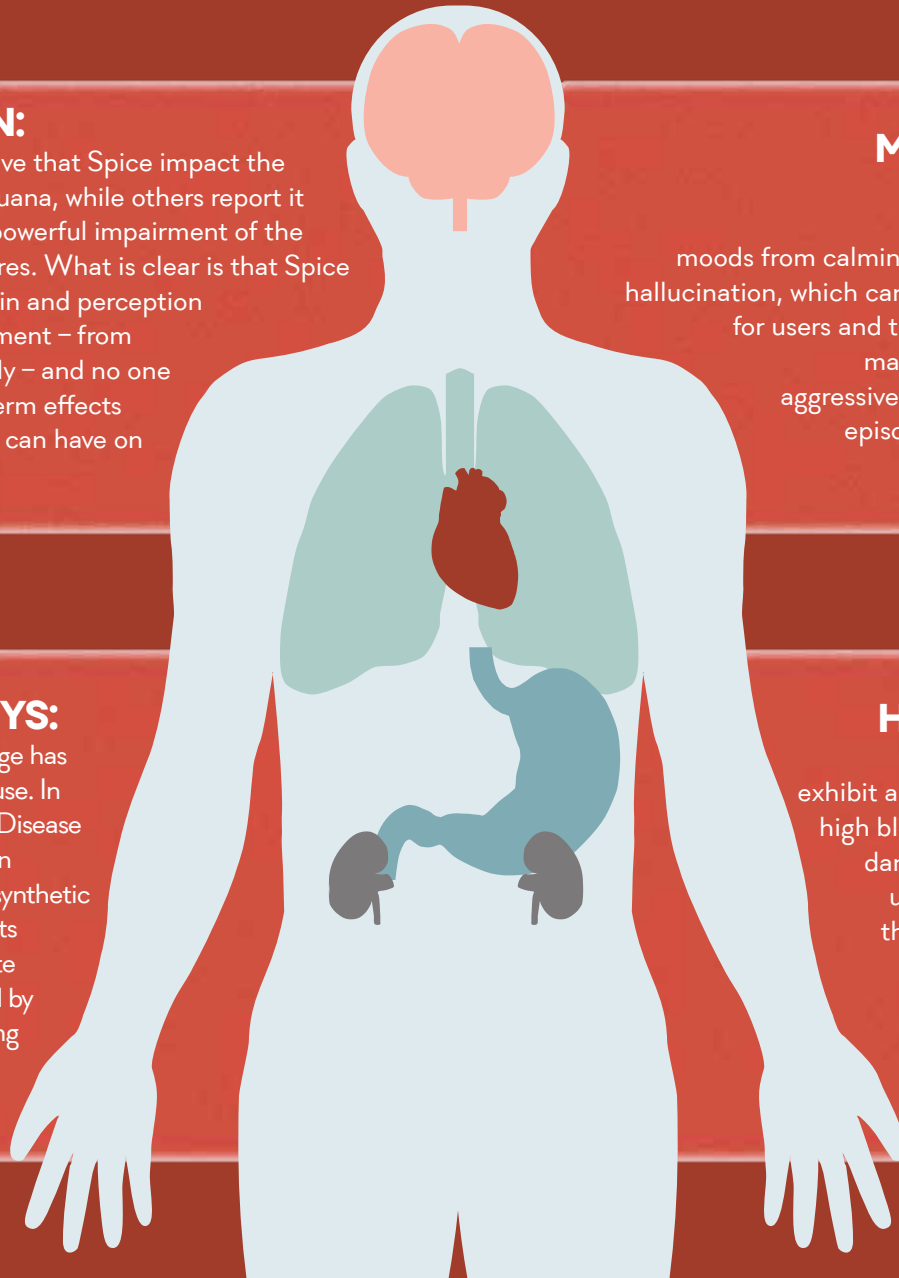
## KIDNEYS:

Kidney damage has been linked to Spice use. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention examined 16 cases of synthetic drug use and all patients displayed levels of acute kidney damage caused by the substance, including five requiring dialysis.



## HEART:

Spice users often exhibit an elevated heart rate and high blood pressure. This can cause dangerous health conditions for users, including heart arteries that spasm and block blood to the heart. There are many documented reports of youth having heart attacks after smoking Spice.



## OTHER WAYS SPICE AFFECTS YOUR BODY:

Other health implications commonly linked to synthetic drug use include lowered blood flow to other body organs; elevated toxicity; nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain; and more.



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# Hot Topics

IN ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH Special Edition

## SPICE: A dangerous, alarming health threat to Alaska's youth

It seems that every day we encourage our youth to live healthy lifestyles and practice safe behaviors, but there are many longtime threats that we continue fighting – tobacco and alcohol use, diabetes, vehicle and firearm safety, and more. Now there is a new, dangerous and urgent threat to our youth, the synthetic drug commonly referred to as “Spice.”

Spice is composed of man-made chemicals that mimic the ingredients in marijuana when smoked. Some of these products are advertised as “natural,” so consumers will think they are safe. But synthetic marijuana products are much more dangerous and unpredictable than marijuana, and are becoming disturbingly more popular amongst our youth. According to the 2012 Monitoring the Future survey of youth drug-use trends, one in nine 12th graders in America reported using Spice in the past year. Use by Alaska's youth is also being reported.

Users seek a “legal high” experience similar to marijuana, but every user's experience is different. Many find a darker side of the substance with unpleasant effects more like cocaine, LSD and methamphetamine. The health implications of Spice use are erratic and frightening: heart arrhythmias, hallucinations, seizures, acute kidney failure, violent episodes, and even death and suicide. Users sometimes arrive at hospital emergency departments because they are agitated and violent, hurting themselves and others.

Many states, including Alaska, have banned the sale of these products, and the Food and Drug Administration, Drug Enforcement Administration, and even President Obama have worked to curtail the sale and use of Spice. But these drugs are still available in retail outlets and on the Internet, sold as “herbal incense,” “potpourri,” “bath salts” or “jewelry cleaner.” They are labeled “not for human consumption.”

Health warnings about Spice have been issued by numerous public health authorities and poison control centers, but our youth continue to use these substances. Because these drugs are relatively new and the chemicals used to produce them are constantly changing, users don't know exactly what they are smoking and health care leaders don't fully understand the short- or long-term effects of their use.

That's why we must act immediately and effectively to inform our youth, parents and community leaders about the dangers of these drugs, and work to stop their sale and use in our communities. It will save lives and end unnecessary tragedy among our people.

