

Massachusetts Drug Supply Data Stream (MADDS)

Public Health Alert

Synthetic Cannabinoid "ADB-BUTINACA" aka "ADB-BINACA" Detected in Dope/Heroin/Fentanyl

- Multiple samples sold as dope/heroin/fentanyl (n=7), Xanax (n=1), and unknown (n=1) have been confirmed to contain ADB-BUTINACA. Samples were detected across three cities in Massachusetts (Boston, Revere, and Lawrence) from April 2021 to August 2021. Of the 9 samples confirmed to contain ADB-BUTINACA, 8 also contained fentanyl and 7 contained 4-fluorofentanyl, a potent analogue of fentanyl.
- ADB-BUTINACA is a synthetic cannabinoid ("K2"/"Spice") first identified in 2019. ADB-BUTINACA has been found in powders, pills, and drug residues. All samples were collected in collaboration with local harm reduction agencies and submitted for MADDS testing.
- From user experience reports, the ADB-BUTINACA presence was not suspected, intended, or desired. All cases were associated with a negative experience and/or concerning health effects, such as: "extreme paranoia"; 'felt like K2/Spice'; 'tripping sensation'; 'got an allergy-like reaction at injection site'; 'out-of-body experience'; 'blacked out for 5 hours, didn't remember anything.'"

How to Identify the Drug

- It is difficult to identify ADB-BUTINACA without analytical testing. ADB-BUTINACA typically appears as a beige or yellowish powder and readily blends into other available street drugs. Small quantities of ADB-BUTINACA in a sample make it difficult to identify since other components can mask identifiers such as color, smell, and taste.
- Synthetic cannabinoids like ADB-BUTINACA are usually sprayed onto plant material or put into blotter paper and smoked. They can also be vaped or consumed orally. For the ADB-BUTINACA containing samples sold as street dope, people were injecting them. Consumers did not report knowing about the presence of ADB-BUTINACA until after use.

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Health Effects

- Severe symptoms have been reported from synthetic cannabinoid use: seizures, heart attack, acute kidney injury, pulmonary edema, stroke, delirium, psychosis, rapid loss of consciousness, vomiting, and multiple organ failure. The health effects observed using synthetic cannabinoids are rarely observed following cannabis consumption.
- ADB-BUTINACA has been linked to multiple severe poisonings and death. Mixing synthetic cannabinoids with any drugs, particularly opioids or benzodiazepines, puts people at a higher risk of overdose.
- Understanding of the pharmacology and mechanism of toxicity is poor for ADB-BUTINACA as data are limited. The toxic and lethal dose of ADB-BUTINACA is unknown. ADB-BUTINACA is manufactured in clandestine laboratories and is not cut or packaged in a standard fashion. Potency varies widely for the end user.

Harm Reduction

- Always use with someone else present who can help you with Narcan and calling for help.
- Know the symptoms of synthetic cannabinoid use and call 911 immediately if any health effects noted above arise. If overheating, drink plenty of water, stay calm and cool until help arrives.
- Take care of your body by going for regular check-ups with your doctor and taking any prescribed medications.
- If you are concerned about what is in your drugs, please contact a local harm reduction community organization to get additional advice on safe use and availability of drug checking with MADDS.

MADDS is a state-funded collaboration between Brandeis University researchers, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, various town police departments and local harm reduction agencies. Contact us at maddsbrandeis@gmail.com