



### **Synthetic Drugs: What a Correctional Officer Needs to Know**

Synthetic drugs are known by numerous names (Spice, bath salts, K2, and Molly to name a few), and are legally sold in the community as incense or other products “not meant for human consumption” but have an alternate use to produce a high without causing a positive urine drug screen. The lack of a positive drug screen makes these drugs very attractive to people who are incarcerated or on parole. The problem is that each batch of these synthetic drugs of abuse contains different chemicals meaning each batch can produce different effects some of which can be life-threatening. These drugs can be swallowed, injected into veins, snorted or inserted into the rectum. Small amounts can cause devastating effects, so please be diligent when searching cells.

These synthetic drugs can produce similar effects as marijuana, amphetamines or LSD when used. The users of these drugs are very likely to have serious side-effects. As a correctional officer, you need to be aware that a patient having the following symptoms may have used synthetic drugs:

- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Aggression
- Paranoia (potentially resulting in violent attacks or even suicide attempts)
- Hallucinations (seeing, feeling or hearing things that are not really there)
- Inability to speak
- Tremors
- Seizures (violent, uncontrolled movements)
- Unconsciousness/unresponsiveness
- Vomiting
- Numbness/tingling
- Headache
- Profuse sweating

If you encounter a patient exhibiting behavior or mental status changes described above and have reason to suspect that there is the possibility that they could have recently used synthetic drugs, notify medical personnel now.

For patients who are unconscious/unresponsive and you suspect synthetic drug use, normal CPR steps should be taken (CAB- Circulation, Airway, and Breathing).

Patient Safety Committee, Correct Care Solutions