

Teens Flocking to Dangerous New Synthetic Drug and 'Dabbing'

Trends among kids and teens move so fast that it can be hard for parents to keep up. Those jeans are so last week. That song? No longer cool. And no one uses that phrase anymore.

But the ever-emerging types of synthetic drugs are something parents definitely need to keep up with, says Karl Benzio, M.D., a psychiatrist and founder and executive director of Lighthouse Network, an addiction and mental-health counseling helpline.

A new synthetic drug called Cloud 9—a powerful liquid that is dropped on the tongue or even mixed with gum or soda—has sent multiple teens to the hospital in Michigan. And a new method of ingesting marijuana called “dabbing” involves inhaling a highly potent pot vapor after users burn hash oil or THC oil with blow torches to create a wax. The wax is then heated again so the vapor can be inhaled.

“The fact that kids and teens are discovering new ways to take these powerful, dangerous drugs is scary,” Benzio said. “They sometimes think that because they make it at home or get it from a friend rather than on the street, this makes it safer. But the vapor that comes from this marijuana wax, for example, is five times stronger than smoking pot in a joint or through a pipe—it’s like free-basing. And the fact that getting Cloud 9 is so easy and that students are using it at school is evidence that this drug is powerful and making rounds among kids.”

In “dabbing,” the hash or THC oils can also be used to fill e-cigarettes or “vape pens.” One mother who was interviewed by a CBS station in Chicago said she nearly fainted after trying

her adult daughter's vape pen that contained just four or five drops of the liquid. She said her daughter bought a bottle of the oil for \$30 from the back room of a tobacco store.

Cloud 9 is also a powerful liquid that can be taken through a vaporizer or e-cigarette. Also called "bath salts," Cloud 9 has effects similar to cocaine or meth. Hallucinations, nausea, vomiting and an extremely high heart rate are all symptoms.

"When teens try these types of drugs and experiment with new ways of getting high," Benzio said, "it's a telling sign that there is a very real danger of their trying much stronger, much more dangerous drugs and becoming addicted to them. Once someone is addicted to a feeling of being high, they will fuel the need to recreate that experience again and again, eventually turning to deadlier and more addictive substances."