The Dangers of Smoking Marijuana Wax

Karre Palacios, CADC II
Chemical Dependency Counselor
Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health, Inc.
“Wax”

“Budder”
What is Wax?

• A concentrated form of marijuana

• Wax is reported as being the purest cannabis product available, at anywhere between 82% and 99.7% pure THC, making it several times more potent than the buds of the cannabis plant that are usually consumed (5%-28%)

• One hit of wax, a minuscule amount (about the size of the head of a pin), is supposedly equal to 1-2 full marijuana joints

• Wax is the most powerful marijuana concentrate on the market

• It leads to a quicker, stronger high
How is it Made?

- Long tubes are packed full of marijuana leaves or any left over shake or trim
- Compressed butane is shot through the tube saturating the plant for 30 sec
- The butane leeches the THC from the plant and it flows out in a greenish muck into a pan
• Place pan inside another pan of boiling hot water waiting 15-20 min for the butane to evaporate (hopefully)

• Scrape the oil off the pan
Dangers of Making Wax

- According to Riverside County Fire Department, in the 90s, majority of the home fires reported in Southern California were from methamphetamine labs.

- Today, they are from wax labs inside regular homes in regular neighborhoods.
• Malibu
• City of Commerce
• Hemet
• Palm Springs
• Huntington Park
• Glendale
• Tustin
• Dana Point
• Moreno Valley
• San Diego
• Yucaipa
How is it Smoked?
Electronic Pens for Wax

[Image of electronic pens and a close-up view of the inside of one, labeled as 'WICK', 'COILS', and 'WAX/OIL']
• Using a pen produces little to no smell

• People are using these devices in public and teens in their bedrooms where no one knows

• The pen allows the product to become vapor which doesn’t burn the product, it pulls the THC off of it
What the Medical Marijuana Clinics Are Saying

• BHO wax is illegal to purchase and sell in California

• The wax that they are selling has been extracted using compressed Co2

• In California, there is one company who uses this method to sell to medical marijuana clinics which costs $30,000 to own

• The use of wax is meant to get into the system fast and stimulate hunger

• Fearful that BHO wax will hurt the legalization movement
What are the Teens Saying?

“It feels like you’ve been hit in the chest”

“I didn’t have to wait for it to kick in, I got high right away”

“It’s the highest I’ve ever been and I felt as if I was leaving my body”

“After smoking, I don’t remember”

“I haven’t been the same”

“I now see a psychiatrist and have been diagnosed schizo-affective”
What We Know

• The chemicals in the sativa plant, most of which are psychoactive – they change or alter the brain. Use hinders short-term memory and effects perception and reaction time.

• Think about the still developing brain in middle and high school teens. Research shows that more than 40% of teens will try marijuana before they graduate.

• According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a recent study followed people from age 13-38 who were regular smokers had a significant drop in IQ, even if they quit.

• Marijuana itself is addictive and can lead to other drugs down the line

• The withdrawal from marijuana can range from irritability, sleeplessness, loss in appetite, and night sweats
What is the Latest Research?

Symptoms include:

- Temporary psychotic breaks
- Hallucinations
- Tactile sensations like things crawling under the skin
- Anxiety

High doses of marijuana can induce psychosis and can worsen symptoms in those with schizophrenia.

Wax made with butane leaves small molecules that adhere to the lungs and creates a black spot much like miners lung.
What We’ve Seen on Local Reservations

- Amateur “scientists” are making wax at home on tribal land
- Selling or giving it to adolescents to try because it’s being made within the family circle
- The supply seems to be endless due to having the finances to meet the demand within Southern California gaming tribes
- 4 out of 5 adolescent patients have admitted to at least trying wax and most are active wax smokers
What Can We Do?

- Educate ourselves so that we can educate others
- Prevention through education
- Open communication between parents and teens
- Reconnect with culture
References


Scott, B. (2014). Next level caregivers In: Hemet, CA [interview].
Q & A