

This is an official  
**CDC Health Advisory**

Distributed via Health Alert Network  
December 10 2018; 3:30 PM  
10426-CAD-12-10-2018-CANNA

## **Update—Outbreak of Life-threatening Coagulopathy Associated with Synthetic Cannabinoids Use**

### **Summary**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is providing information on: 1) the current status of a multistate outbreak of coagulopathy from exposure to synthetic cannabinoid products containing a vitamin K-epoxide cycle antagonist, brodifacoum; 2) the emergence of 2 new clinical scenarios; and 3) recommendations to help clinicians make decisions related to these 2 new clinical scenarios.

This is an update to the Health Alert Network (HAN) advisory released on May 25, 2018 titled *Outbreak of Life-threatening Coagulopathy Associated with Synthetic Cannabinoids Use* (<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00410.asp>).

### **Outbreak Update**

Since the index patient with hypocoagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoids use was identified on March 8, 2018 in Illinois, at least 324 people have presented to healthcare facilities with serious bleeding from possible exposure. The largest number of patients were in Illinois (164), followed by Wisconsin (86), Maryland (44), Florida (6), Pennsylvania (6), Missouri (5), North Carolina (5), Indiana (5), Kentucky (1), Virginia (1), and West Virginia (1). Laboratory investigation confirmed brodifacoum exposure in at least 150 patients. There have been at least eight (8) fatalities. Vitamin K1 continues to be the recommended therapy. Since the original HAN advisory on May 25, 2018, two (2) new clinical scenarios have emerged:

1. Several patients have outpatient follow-up blood brodifacoum concentrations that are higher than their initial blood brodifacoum concentrations.
2. At least one patient has become pregnant since starting outpatient oral Vitamin K1 treatment.

When patients are found to have outpatient follow-up blood brodifacoum concentrations higher than their initial blood brodifacoum concentrations, it strongly suggests that they have continued or resumed using synthetic cannabinoid products containing brodifacoum while on oral vitamin K1 therapy. The consequences of re-exposure to brodifacoum include:

1. Risk of life-threatening hemorrhage,
2. Oral vitamin K1 dosing may need to be increased, and
3. Oral vitamin K1 treatment duration may need to be extended.

Pregnancies in patients who are on oral vitamin K1 treatment for brodifacoum toxicity are high-risk pregnancies. Brodifacoum crosses the placenta. Both mother and fetus are at risk for serious bleeding. Brodifacoum may also be a teratogen because its chemical structure is similar to warfarin, a known teratogen.

### **Recommendations for Clinicians**

1. Maintain a high index of suspicion for continued or resumed use of synthetic cannabinoid products containing brodifacoum in patients who are on oral vitamin K1 therapy. Ask these patients about continued or resumed use of synthetic cannabinoid products.
2. Counsel against resuming or continuing use of synthetic cannabinoid products. Refer patients to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) national helpline, 1-800-662-HELP(4357), a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service in English and Spanish for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders; substance abuse counseling is also available.
3. Advise patients that their current oral vitamin K1 dosing may not prevent recurrent coagulopathy from re-exposure to brodifacoum in synthetic cannabinoid products and the duration of oral vitamin K1 treatment may need to be extended.
4. Consider periodic quantitative testing of patients' blood for brodifacoum during outpatient follow-up visits to inform if patients continued or resumed use of synthetic cannabinoid products containing brodifacoum. In addition, serial blood brodifacoum concentrations allow for calculation of blood brodifacoum half-life and assist in determining duration of oral vitamin K1 therapy.
5. Ask all women of childbearing age who are on oral vitamin K1 therapy about the possibility of being pregnant and counsel them about reliable contraceptive techniques. A periodic pregnancy test should be performed on all women of childbearing age who are on oral vitamin K1 therapy. Pregnant patients on oral vitamin K1 should be referred for high-risk pregnancy management and follow-up.
6. Contact your local poison control center (1-800-222-1222) for questions on diagnostic testing and management of these patients.
7. Promptly report possible cases to your local or state health department.

### **Recommendations for the Public**

1. CDC recommends that people do not use synthetic cannabinoid products. Synthetic cannabinoid products are always dangerous because it is impossible for people to know what chemicals are in the product, how much they are being exposed to, and how their body will react to the chemicals. The synthetic cannabinoid products associated with this outbreak are especially dangerous because they contain brodifacoum, a chemical used as rat poison that can cause uncontrolled bleeding.
2. People who have used synthetic cannabinoid products in the past three months and are concerned about their health should contact their healthcare provider. Synthetic

cannabinoid products users who develop any unusual bruising or bleeding should immediately seek medical attention.

3. People who are currently on oral vitamin K1 treatment for brodifacoum poisoning should not use synthetic cannabinoid products, as this can cause new or worsening bleeding and may prolong the course of vitamin K1 treatment. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) national helpline, 1-800-662-HELP(4357), is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service in English and Spanish for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.
4. Women who are currently on oral vitamin K1 treatment for brodifacoum poisoning should use an effective contraceptive method to prevent pregnancy while being treated.

### **For More Information**

1. CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity: Outbreak Alert Update: Potential Life-Threatening Vitamin K-Dependent Antagonist Coagulopathy Associated With Synthetic Cannabinoids Use.  
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCDC/bulletins/21e1a0fExternal>
2. Synthetic cannabinoids: What are they? What are their effects?  
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/chemicals/sc/default.html>
3. Synthetic cannabinoids: An Overview for Healthcare Providers.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/chemicals/sc/healthcare.html>

### **DHEC contact information for reportable diseases and reporting requirements**

Reporting of possible cases of coagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoids use is consistent with South Carolina Law requiring the reporting of diseases and conditions to your state or local public health department. (State Law # 44-29-10 and Regulation # 61-20) as per the DHEC 2018 List of Reportable Conditions available at:

<https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-009025.pdf>

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

## Regional Public Health Offices – 2018

Mail or call reports to the Epidemiology Office in each Public Health Region

### MAIL TO:

<p><b>Lowcountry</b> 4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600 N. Charleston, SC 29405 Fax: (843) 953-0051</p>	<p><b>Midlands</b> 2000 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29204 Fax: (803) 576-2993</p>	<p><b>Pee Dee</b> 145 E. Cheves Street Florence, SC 29506 Fax: (843) 661-4859</p>	<p><b>Upstate</b> 200 University Ridge Greenville, SC 29602 Fax: (864) 282-4373</p>
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### CALL TO:

<p><b>Lowcountry</b> <b>Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester</b> Phone: (843) 953-0043 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p> <p><b>Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper</b> Phone: (843) 549-1516 ext. 218 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p> <p><b>Allendale, Bamberg, Calhoun, Orangeburg</b> Phone: (803) 268-5833 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p>	<p><b>Midlands</b> <b>Kershaw, Lexington, Newberry, Richland</b> Phone: (803) 576-2749 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p> <p><b>Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, York</b> Phone: (803) 286-9948 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p> <p><b>Aiken, Barnwell, Edgefield, Saluda</b> Phone: (803) 642-1618 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p>	<p><b>Pee Dee</b> <b>Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, Marion</b> Phone: (843) 661-4830 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p> <p><b>Clarendon, Lee, Sumter</b> Phone: (803) 773-5511 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p> <p><b>Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg</b> Phone: (843) 915-8804 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p>	<p><b>Upstate</b> <b>Anderson, Oconee</b> Phone: (864) 260-5581 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p> <p><b>Abbeville, Greenwood, McCormick</b> Phone: (864) 260-5581 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p> <p><b>Cherokee, Greenville, Laurens, Pickens, Spartanburg, Union</b> Phone: (864) 372-3133 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p>
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For information on reportable conditions, see  
<https://www.scdhec.gov/health-professionals/report-diseases-adverse-events/south-carolina-list-reportable-conditions>

**DHEC Bureau of Disease Control**  
**Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology**  
 2100 Bull St • Columbia, SC 29201  
 Phone: (803) 898-0861 • Fax: (803) 898-0897  
 Nights / Weekends: 1-888-847-0902

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- Health Alert** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
- Health Advisory** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
- Health Update** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
- Info Service** Provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.