toxtidbits
the maryland poison center's monthly update. news. advances. information.
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Nutmeg Abuse

Nutmeg is a widely used food spice that has received attention as an alternative hallucinogen. Nutmeg oil contains a number of components that produce psychotropic effects, including myristicin and elemicin. Myristicin is thought to be metabolized to 3-methoxy-4, 5-methylenedioxyamphetamine and elemicin to 3, 3, 5-trimethoxy amphetamine (TMA); however, these metabolic pathways have recently been disputed. There has been a suggestion that nutmeg's components have pharmacological activities at serotonin receptors similar to mescaline and 3-methoxy-4,5-methylenedioxyamphetamine (MMDA), a psychoactive compound related to amphetamine. Myristicin also has anticholinergic effects and weak monoamine oxidase inhibiting properties, which may be responsible for some of its cardiovascular effects.

Nutmeg is generally ingested as a powder, although whole nutmegs have been ingested, and reports of snorting and smoking the powder have surfaced. The typical dose used for abuse ranges from 5 to 30 g, with one tablespoon containing approximately 7 g. Symptoms of nutmeg poisoning appear within 6 hours after ingestion and can include euphoria, hallucinations, anxiety, headache, drowsiness, tachycardia, hypotension, flushing, nausea, vomiting, paresthesias, blurred vision, sweating, and hypothermia. Nutmeg poisoning is generally self-limiting, with most symptoms resolving within 24 h after ingestion.

Nutmeg abuse is not widespread due to several reasons. These include the need for a large dose, unpleasant effects such as fear and anxiety, a lack of effectiveness as compared to other hallucinogens, and an unpredictable response. Nutmeg, however, is easily obtainable and legal and its use is perpetuated in easy access resources such as the Internet.

The treatment of nutmeg poisoning is primarily supportive. Adequate sedation for central nervous system excitation and increased muscle activity, along with hydration and respiratory support, are indicated in symptomatic nutmeg poisoning. Gastric decontamination with activated charcoal may play a role in cases of recent acute nutmeg ingestion.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT… *federal funding for poison centers is in jeopardy?*

The House of Representatives recently voted to cut $27.3 million of the allotted $29.3 million from the federal poison control program. This move could lead to the closure of many U.S. poison centers. If this were to happen, health care costs would skyrocket. Poison centers have been shown to save health care dollars as well as save lives. For every $1 spent on poison center services, at least $7 is saved in health care costs by avoiding unnecessary EMS transports and emergency department visits, and by shortening the length of hospital admissions. To find out how you can support funding for poison centers, go to **www.AAPCC.org** today.

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