

NUTMEG ABUSE

By Chris Wagner

ALERT

TREND

Back in early December, 2010 media outlets were reporting on the latest drug abuse trend among teenagers. The reports indicated that teens were grabbing nutmeg off the spice rack in an attempt at achieving a cheap high. What do parents need to know about this troubling trend?

Though nutmeg abuse does not currently appear to be widespread, many inquisitive teens and young adults are prone to experiment with the substance. One reason for this is because Nutmeg is readily available in the kitchen cupboard or spice rack or can be obtained cheaply at any grocery store. Vulnerable teens consider nutmeg a legal way to get a buzz. Videos on YouTube show teens abusing the spice in a variety of ways. Nutmeg can be smoked in cigarette form or using a water pipe or bong, snorted, eaten, mixed with a drink, or taken in pill form. Generally, large amounts of nutmeg need to be consumed before concern is warranted, but ill effects can occur with doses as small as two tablespoons.

So are kids really experiencing a high from nutmeg? Nutmeg does contain a compound called myristicin that has been observed to cause hypertension and mild hallucinations. Because consuming large amounts of nutmeg is not generally pleasant, few users may experience these physiological or neurological responses. Instead, headache and nausea, along with vomiting are common side effects for those who do manage to consume enough of the spice. These effects, when felt, can take several hours to kick in and, depending on the amount consumed, can last for a couple of days.

Nutmeg is not considered to be an addictive substance, and most who experiment with it are not inclined to do so again. The negative side effects usually outweigh any "highs" experienced. Even so, this is a trend that parents still need to monitor closely. There's probably no reason to justify keeping your spices behind lock and key, but if you suspect nutmeg abuse is occurring in your home, it is probably a good idea to monitor the supply of nutmeg found in your kitchen. Unexplained or prolonged headaches, along with vomiting are the most obvious signs to look for in your teen.

Nutmeg abuse itself may not be a serious threat to the health of your children or teen, but parents do need to consider the deeper issues of why their child is choosing to abuse any substance in the first place. What are the situations in their life that are causing them to seek an escape from reality and experience a "high?" How much are their peers influencing their behavior? If you discover your teen is abusing nutmeg, be sure to dig down to these bigger concerns so as to deal with the real issue at hand. Seek professional help from a competent Christian counselor if necessary. Be sure to address the problem of nutmeg abuse before your teen graduates to more illicit drugs and experimentation.

Parents can also take a proactive approach and speak to their kids about the dangers of drug abuse at a young age, before their inquisitive nature gets the best of them. Be sure to also discuss what the Bible has to say about substance abuse and taking care of our bodies.

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