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I Use "Wax" Because It Makes Me Calmer, But Now I Am Seeing 3D Images

To the Editor: Use of high-potency cannabis derivatives has become increasingly popular over the past few years; however, their effects are not fully known. Here, we present the case of a woman who experienced hallucinations after using "wax."

Case report. A 39-year-old single white woman with a past psychiatric history of posttraumatic stress disorder and cannabis use disorder presented for a follow-up appointment. She was seen in the psychiatry clinic earlier than originally scheduled because she was experiencing new auditory and visual hallucinations. She described her visual hallucinations as seeing 3D images and lights. At this appointment, she was diagnosed with unspecified psychosis (DSM-5 criteria).

Further questioning at follow-up appointments revealed the patient was producing and using a concentrated form of marijuana that she was calling wax. She described in detail how to prepare the wax. She would place marijuana leaves and lighter fluid in a glass bowl and then heat the substance until the mixture became a greenish-yellow, thick, waxy consistency. She would then cool the substance and store it in a contact lens holder. She would place the wax in a vaporizer and use it when she was feeling anxious. She stated that this improved her anxiety and made her feel calm. However, although her anxiety was improved, she was now having hallucinations that were scaring her.

Wax is a form of cannabis. *Butane hash oil, shatter, budder, ear wax, and honeycomb* are some of the other colloquial terms used by patients to describe this concentrated tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) product. The inhalation of concentrated THC through butane extraction is called dabbing.¹ Modification of cannabis using butane is popularly called wax in the southwest United States. Wax production at home requires few resources, with free instructional videos available on social media. The production of wax at home is called "blasting." This process involves passing butane through a glass tube packed with cannabis trimmings. The THC dissolves within butane, and the combination passes through the tube and is collected on a tray. The volatile butane gas then evaporates and leaves a greenish-colored resin that can have THC concentrations of up to 70%–80%.¹

Butane hash oil burns are another growing problem that has been mentioned in various case series.² According to these reports,² the injuries were sustained during the production of these concentrates, with burn sizes ranging from 16% to 96% of the total body surface area as butane is extremely flammable.

Cannabis-induced psychosis and its related development of a schizophrenia spectrum disorder or other severe psychopathology is a rising concern.^{3,4} The use of high-potency cannabis derivatives may have a more detrimental effect on mental health than the use of lower-potency cannabis.⁵ The increased prevalence and potency of marijuana derivatives like wax warrants further research.

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