

What can parents and other influencers of young people say?

It is impossible to know what these drugs contain, or who made them, or what you are going to get.

Just because a drug is legal—or is labeled as legal—does not mean that it is safe.

The teenage brain is a work in progress. Anything you put in your body that would change your feelings or emotions—whether it is something you would smoke, drink, take in pill form, or shoot with a needle—should be avoided.

The long-term effects of synthetic drugs are not known because the drugs are so new.



For more information:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov

U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency
www.justice.gov/dea

American Assoc. of Poison Control Centers
www.aapcc.org

The Partnership at Drugfree.org
www.drugfree.org

New York Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
www.oasas.ny.gov

Community Coalition for Healthy Youth
www.healthyyouth.org

Tompkins County treatment resources:

Alcohol & Drug Council
www.alcoholdrugcouncil.org/

Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services
www.carsny.org



Resources used for this publication:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
The Partnership at Drugfree.org
U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency
American Assoc. of Poison Control Centers
Gateway Foundation
Web MD
The Daily Beast

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Bath Salts

Facts

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Laws

about bath salts



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www.healthyyouth.org

What are bath salts?

“Bath Salts” is the nickname of a synthetic (man-made) drug that is sold over the Internet, in head shops, tattoo parlors, and even at gas stations and convenience stores. Some bath salts are packaged as plant food, vitamins or “energy boosters,” insect repellent, or stain remover.

What form do bath salts come in?

Bath salts may come in the form of powders, tablets, or capsules. They may come in a packet about the size of a moist towelette, in small plastic bags, or in small vials or jars. The packaging, often colorful, typically contains 50- to 500-milligrams of crystalline powder under several brand names, including K4 Rage, Cloud Nine, Vanilla Sky, White Lightning, Hurricane Charlie, and Ivory Wave.

What are bath salts made of?

Bath salts are a man-made chemical (as opposed to organic) stimulant drug. The technical term for bath salts is “substituted cathinone.” Most bath salts contain MDPV (also known as 3,4-Methylenedioxy-pyrovalerone), methylone or mephedrone. All are synthetic versions of a natural ingredient found in the East African *khat* plant.

What do bath salts do?

Bath salts act in the brain like stimulants such as cocaine, methamphetamine, Ecstasy, or speed. Use of bath salts produces an intense high, extreme energy, increased heart rate, flashes of euphoria, an intense craving for more of the drug, excessive sweating, and insomnia. The drug takes effect within 15 minutes and lasts six to eight hours but with re-dosing, the symptoms are prolonged and can last for several days.

How are they used?

They may be taken orally, inhaled, smoked, or injected.

How serious are the risks?

Bath salts have been linked to an alarming number of Emergency Room visits across the U.S. In 2010, poison centers received 304 calls about bath salts; in 2011 that number rose dramatically to 6,138 calls.

Bath salts can cause chest pains, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, hallucinations, agitation, extreme paranoia, violent behavior, and delusions.

An additional risk is that there is no standard formulation for these drugs. The composition of chemicals sold in one packet may be completely different than what is sold in an identical packet.

Long term risks are not known.

Why do people take bath salts?

Some people who must undergo regular drug testing take bath salts because, until recently, test kits could not detect the drug in a person’s system.

Others use bath salts for the same reasons why some people use stimulants: to get high, to escape, or just to get energy to make it through the day. Peer pressure and curiosity can also play a role.

Some potential users may think bath salts are safer than other stimulants like meth or cocaine.

And finally, these drugs are readily available.

How can you tell if something that is labeled as a bath salt is really a drug?

First consider where it is being sold and how it is labeled. For example, head shops, which are in the business of selling drug paraphernalia just within the limits of the law, are not where most people go to buy plant food.

Next, think about the size of the package and its advertised use. If the package is the size of a moist towelette, it probably isn’t designed for use in a bathtub that can hold 60 gallons of water.

In addition, consider the cost. Most packets of bath salts cost \$25 to \$50 for a 50-milligram packet. One product advertised as a bonsai tree fertilizer would cost \$4,000 for a pound of fertilizer.

Finally, examine any printed warnings. If the package says that it is “not illegal,” “not for human consumption” or “for adults only,” the company may be trying to get around laws regarding the substances contained in the package.

If bath salts are so dangerous, why aren’t they illegal?

By marketing them as bath salts and labeling them “not for human consumption,” manufacturers have been able to avoid them being termed illegal. In September, 2011 the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency issued a temporary ban of three of the drugs found in bath salts, making it illegal to possess and sell products that contain these chemicals. A permanent ban is under consideration. However, manufacturers try to avoid prosecution by making minor changes to the chemical make-up of these substances, posing a challenge for regulators to stay ahead of new formulas that are not covered by current laws.