

Quick Facts Bulletin



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Quick Facts Alert: "Bath Salts"

Bath Salts have been in the national news over the past few months as community officials scramble to keep up with the latest in the growing number of synthetic designer drugs on the market. Calls to poison control centers have grown at an alarming rate. In 2010, there were 301 calls about bath salts to poison control centers nationwide. In just the first three months of 2011, however, the number of calls has already topped 1400. Reports indicate that a growing number of states are seeing use of bath salts across a wide range of age groups. Here is some of what we know about this substance:

What are bath salts? "Bath salts" are designer synthetic central nervous system stimulants containing powerful chemicals, including mephedrone and methylenedioxypropylamphetamine (MDPV). Bath salts are sold online as well as in convenience stores, gas stations, and drug paraphernalia stores (head shops). They are sold as a crystallized powder in up to 500 milligram packets. Both Granite City and Alton have moved to ban bath salts within their communities, but currently they are legal to purchase over-the-counter in other towns in our area. The brand name for these substances include Ivory Wave, Purple Wave, Bliss, Red Dove, Vanilla Sky, Cloud 9, and several others. These substances should not be confused with traditional bath salts.

How are bath salts used? Bath Salts are typically snorted, but can also be swallowed or smoked. Reports from law enforcement share the use of the term "Head Trip Potpourri" to indicate a joint rolled with bath salts and then smoked.

What are the signs and symptoms of bath salt use? Short term effects of bath salts mimic other hallucinogenic- amphetamines and include extreme paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, agitation, suicidal thoughts, tachycardia, chest pain, and headaches. Long term effects are not yet known due to the relative "newness" of the drugs. Some users become extremely combative and have been known to present a danger to themselves and others. Symptoms can last from a few hours to two or three days.

Why should we be concerned in this area? Although we continue to see alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco as the initial drugs of choice (gateway drugs) and as a significant risk to our youth, we also want to share information with you about other drugs that pose a clear and immediate threat to the community. Reports from law enforcement indicate that bath salt use is increasing in this area. According to Captain Brad Wells of the Madison County Sheriff's Department, "This substance, and the fact that legislation has not caught up with it in terms of legality, is an alarming public health issue". He adds that "people are using this substance in place of cocaine or other illegal substances. They are buying it over-the-counter and are ending up in ambulances headed to the hospital". At least two local hospitals report that they have seen cases of bath salt overdose in their emergency rooms. Patients are presenting symptoms such as those listed above.

Who Can Help?

There are several websites you can access for more specific information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

These include:

www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

www.nida.nih.gov

www.drugfree.org

Anyone with information regarding suspicious activity related to drugs in their neighborhoods can call the Madison County Sheriff's anonymous tip line at:

(618) 296-3000

If you have specific concerns and would like to speak with someone regarding a youth or adult at risk, or for more information, please call Chestnut Health Systems at:

(618) 288-3100