

XII. Designer Drugs

Recently, the abuse of clandestinely synthesized drugs has re-emerged as a major worldwide problem. These drugs are illicitly produced with the intent of developing substances that differ slightly from controlled substances in their chemical structure while retaining their pharmacological effects. These substances are commonly known as designer drugs and fall under several drug categories. The following section describes these drugs of concern and their associated risks.

Bath Salts or Designer Cathinones (*Synthetic Stimulants*)

WHAT ARE “BATH SALTS?”

Synthetic stimulants often referred to as “bath salts” are from the synthetic cathinone class of drugs. Synthetic cathinones are central nervous stimulants and are designed to mimic effects similar to those produced by cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA (ecstasy). These substances are often marketed as “bath salts,” “research chemicals,” “plant food,” “glass cleaner,” and labeled “not for human consumption,” in order to circumvent application of the Controlled Substance Analogue Enforcement Act. Marketing in this manner attempts to hide the true reason for the products’ existence—the distribution of a psychoactive/stimulant substance for abuse.

WHAT IS THEIR ORIGIN?

Synthetic cathinones are manufactured in East Asia and have been distributed at wholesale levels throughout Europe, North America, Australia, and other parts of the world.



Bath salts

What are common street names?

- Bliss, Blue Silk, Cloud Nine, Drone, Energy-1, Ivory Wave, Lunar Wave, Meow Meow, Ocean Burst, Pure Ivory, Purple Wave, Red Dove, Snow Leopard, Stardust, Vanilla Sky, White Dove, White Knight, White Lightning

What does it look like?

Websites have listed products containing these synthetic stimulants as “plant food” or “bath salts,” however, the powdered form is also compressed in gelatin capsules. The synthetic stimulants are sold at smoke shops, head shops, convenience stores, adult book stores, gas stations, and on Internet sites and often labeled “not for human consumption.”

How are they abused?

“Bath salts” are usually ingested by sniffing/snorting. They can also be taken orally, smoked, or put into a solution and injected into veins.

What is their effect on the mind?

These synthetic substances are abused for their desired effects, such as euphoria and alertness. Other effects that have been reported from the use of these drugs include psychological effects such as confusion, acute psychosis, agitation, combativeness, aggressive, violent, and self-destructive behavior.

What is their effect on the body?

Adverse or toxic effects associated with the abuse of cathinones, including synthetic cathinones, include rapid heartbeat; hypertension; hyperthermia; prolonged dilation of the pupil of the eye; breakdown of muscle fibers that leads to release of muscle fiber contents into bloodstream; teeth grinding; sweating; headaches; palpitations; seizures; as well as paranoia, hallucinations, and delusions.

What are their overdose effects?

In addition to effects above, reports of death from individuals abusing drugs in this class indicate the seriousness of the risk users are taking when ingesting these products.

Which drugs cause similar effects?

They cause effects similar to those of other stimulants such as methamphetamine, MDMA, and cocaine.

What is their legal status in the United States?

In July 2012, the U.S. Government passed Pub.L. 112- 144, the Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act (SDAPA), that classified a number of synthetic substances under Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. SDAPA placed these substances in the most restrictive category of controlled substances. Cannabimimetic agents, including 15 synthetic cannabinoid compounds identified by name, two synthetic cathinone compounds (mephedrone and MDPV), and nine synthetic hallucinogens known as the 2C family, are now restricted by this law. In addition, methylene was permanently controlled by DEA through the administrative process, and another 10 synthetic cathinones became subject to temporary control.

Other synthetic cathinones may be subject to prosecution under the Controlled Substance Analogue Enforcement Act which allows these dangerous substances to be treated as Schedule I controlled substances if certain criteria can be met.