Bath salts: Not your average bubbly [1]

Dear Alice,

I've been hearing about bath salts a lot lately. What are they?

?Salty

Answer

Dear Salty,

The term ?bath salts? most commonly describes a bath product used for achy muscles and aromatherapy. However, the term is also used as slang for an emergent range of synthetically designed drugs that have no place in your bubble bath. Bath salts are a powdery substance, chemically similar to the illicit stimulants meth and MDMA. They are known to cause similar effects, including paranoia, psychosis, severe agitation, increased heart rate, hallucinations, and hyperthermia. Bath salts can be ingested orally, inhaled, or injected for the purpose of getting high.

Originally sold in packages labeled ?bath salts,? the sale of the drug?s main components (mephedrone and methylenedioxypyrovalerone) was outlawed by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration [2] in 2011. However, the drug is still found online, in convenience stores, and on the street under names like ?Ivory Wave,? ?Zoom,? ?White Lightning,? and ?Bolivian Bath.?

Because bath salts are relatively new to the illegal drug market, the exact ingredients and chemical composition of the drug remain unknown. As a result, there is no effective way to administer a bath salts drug test. In addition to the drug?s highly stimulatory effects, the lack of medical knowledge of the drug makes the use of bath salts risky. Phone calls to poison control centers about medical emergencies caused by bath salts ingestion have increased significantly since 2010. However, due to the lack of scientific information about the drug, it is unclear how to properly treat patients under the influence of bath salts, which may result in mental injury or death.

Since bath salts are unregulated and sold illegally, those interested in using them recreationally should know that there is no way be sure what ingredients a given dose of bath salts contains. More research is needed, particularly for potential bath salts users who take prescription medicines (especially amphetamines like Adderall and Ritalin).

To receive more information about bath salts, mephedrone, and methylenedioxypyrovalerone,
you can contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [3]. In addition, Columbia students can speak with a health care provider at Medical Services [4]. More ideas for obtaining drug information can be found on Columbia Health’s Health Topics: Alcohol and Other Drugs [5] page.

Alice!
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