

K2 & Bath Salts: Understanding Synthetic Drugs



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NOT LEGAL. NOT NATURAL. NOT SAFE.

Bath salts and synthetic marijuana such as K2 and Spice are classified as synthetic drugs, which are sold in retail outlets and via the Internet under many different brand labels as "plant food" and "herbal incense," respectively.

Both bath salts and K2 are abused for their psychogenic, hallucinogenic and mood-altering effects. They are marketed and sold on the Internet as "natural" and "safe" substances. However, thousands of users have experienced unintended consequences, such as overdosing and visits to emergency rooms as a result of using synthetic drugs.

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WHAT ARE BATH SALTS?

Bath salts contain man-made chemicals related to amphetamines that often consist of mephedrone, methylenedioxypropylvalerone (MDPV) and methylone, also known as substituted cathinones. The powder-like substance is described as “fake cocaine” and is consumed by snorting, injecting or smoking.

BATH SALTS MAY BE AS ADDICTIVE AS COCAINE

Bath salts have gained popularity among recreational drug users and act in the brain like cocaine, reveals a study published by Behavioral Brain Research journal. Scientists recently tested the effect of the synthetic drug on mice using “intracranial self-stimulation” (ICSS)—a method that has been used for decades as a way to look at how drugs activate the reward circuitry in the brain, which can lead to addiction. Certain drugs increase the brain’s sensitivity to reward stimulation, which in turn makes them work harder to receive the reward. The researchers measured the mice’s wheel-spinning efforts before, during and after they received doses of cocaine or bath salts, and they found that bath salts had the same reward potency as cocaine. These findings suggest that bath salts, although marketed until recently as a relatively benign “legal high” —could be more addictive than people may realize.



According to the 2011 Monitoring the Future Survey, **50% of high school seniors** reported having tried an illicit drug at some time, **40% used one or more drugs** in the past 12 months, and **25% used one or more drugs** in the prior 30 days.

BATH SALTS SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Anxious and jittery behavior
- Insomnia, rapid heart rate, nausea, reduced motor control, seizures
- Severe paranoia, panic attacks, depression and suicidal thoughts
- Erratic behavior with potential for hallucinations, violence and self-mutilation
- Lack of appetite

ALERTING COMMUNITIES ABOUT THE GROWING THREAT OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

As a resource and advocate for substance abuse recovery, Gateway Foundation Alcohol & Drug Treatment is working to build awareness among communities regarding the dangerous health risks associated with synthetic drug use. Banned by state and federal governments, synthetic drugs like K2 and bath salts have proven to be a threat to public health and safety.

In 2010, poison centers nationwide responded to about 3,200 calls related to K2 and bath salts. In 2011, that number jumped to more than 13,000 calls. To help reverse this trend, on July 10, 2012, President Obama signed a law banning more than two dozen of the most common chemicals used to make synthetic drugs.

Gateway Foundation believes that communicating the dangerous and damaging effects of synthetic drugs like K2 and bath salts abuse through public awareness and education is critical. Therefore, we offer free educational materials that highlight signs and symptoms of substance abuse as well as on-site presentations about current drug trends. For more information, please visit RecoverGateway.org or email ContactUs@RecoverGateway.org.

Worried about someone struggling with substance abuse? Gateway Foundation can help. Call our 24-Hour Helpline at 877-505-HOPE (4673) or visit RecoverGateway.org.

WHAT IS SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA OR K2?

K2 can be produced using chemical compounds called JWH-018, JWH-073, JWH-200 and CP-47,497. These compounds are structured similar to THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, and can be sprayed onto varying mixtures of dried herbs, flowers and tobacco leaves. The most common consumption method is smoking.

GATEWAY FOUNDATION SHARES K2 CLINICAL DISCOVERIES

Individuals in substance abuse treatment at Gateway Foundation Alcohol & Drug Treatment have confirmed the dangerous effects of K2 use, such as:

Hallucinations, paranoia, anxiety and over-activation of the central nervous system (e.g., **elevated temperature, rapid heartbeat**) are common. An individual who used K2 reported he felt as though his heart was pounding so intensely it would explode.

Some users report a sensation that can only be best described as a **temporary paralysis of motor movement**. For example, an individual reported he was so high from K2 that he could not tell if he was breathing anymore, but was clearly conscious.

Some users report significant **agitation** and **aggression** when coming off of K2 or when they are eager for their next fix; others may not have this experience at all.

K2 users who were otherwise completely free of suicidal thoughts said **they became suicidal** after using K2. Users of K2 who overdosed reported **blacking out**, having **seizures** and **vomiting**.



K2 SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Appearing dizzy and having trouble walking
- Rapid heart rate, vomiting, agitation and confusion
- Paranoia, panic attacks and giddiness

FREE PARENT TOOLKIT

This free guide, offered by Gateway Foundation, helps parents better understand teen drug and alcohol use. RecoverGateway.org/Toolkit

IS TREATMENT AVAILABLE FOR SYNTHETIC DRUG ABUSE?

Yes, through integrated treatment planning Gateway Foundation can help people who have abused synthetic drugs successfully complete treatment.

The professionals on our treatment team focus on providing the most effective therapies and clinical approaches including the use of evidence-based practices.

These treatments integrate professional research and clinical expertise to achieve the best outcome for an individual.

KERRY HENRY, BA, CADC
Executive Director
Gateway Foundation Springfield



TIPS FOR TALKING TO SOMEONE ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In approaching a loved one about substance abuse, the key is to choose your words and moment carefully when telling him or her how you feel. Ideally, pick a time when he or she is sober and when both of you are feeling calm.

- Begin the dialog in an open, caring and supportive frame of mind. Anything less and the dialog may not go as planned.
- Avoid a moralistic tone about substance abuse. It is better to focus on the consequences that you have observed for the person and for his or her family.
- Plan what you are going to say. This can be an emotionally charged conversation. Script out what you'd like to say, and go over it - it will help keep you on track.

This is not the time to demand your loved one stop abusing alcohol or drugs. The goal is simply to acknowledge that you believe your loved one needs treatment and that you can help with entering treatment.

- State calmly that you believe drug or excessive alcohol use is occurring, provide the evidence, and what you want the person to do about it.
- Be supportive and truly listen to his or her responses, but be firm in your course of action and refuse to argue with the person.
- Have a definite 'next step' plan in mind, including a contact person at an available treatment center and telephone numbers so you can proceed if he or she should agree to treatment.

Learn more about our free and confidential consultation today.

24-Hour Helpline
877-505-HOPE (4673)
RecoverGateway.org

More ways to stay informed



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Learn the signs of substance use and misuse to help recognize the problem, so you can encourage your loved one to seek treatment and recovery support services.

PHYSICAL SIGNS:

Bloodshot eyes or pupils larger or smaller than usual; changes in appetite or sleep patterns; sudden weight loss or weight gain; deterioration of physical appearance or personal grooming habits; unusual smells on the breath, body or clothing; and tremors, slurred speech or impaired coordination.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS:

Drop in attendance and performance at work or school; unexplained need for money or financial problems; engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors; sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts and hobbies; and frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities).

PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS:

Unexplained change in personality or attitude; sudden mood swings, irritability or angry outbursts; periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation or giddiness; lack of motivation; appearing lethargic; and appearing fearful, anxious or paranoid, with no reason.



ILLINOIS' LARGEST PROVIDER OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Aurora Belleville Bloomingdale Carbondale Caseyville
Chicago Northwest Chicago West Lake Villa Pekin Springfield

Gateway Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to making a real difference in the lives of the people we treat. We are recognized as an in-network provider for most health insurance plans and accept fees for service. We also provide treatment to individuals who may be eligible for services funded in whole, or in part, by the Illinois Department of Human Services.