

The DAWN Report

Data Spotlight

September 17, 2013

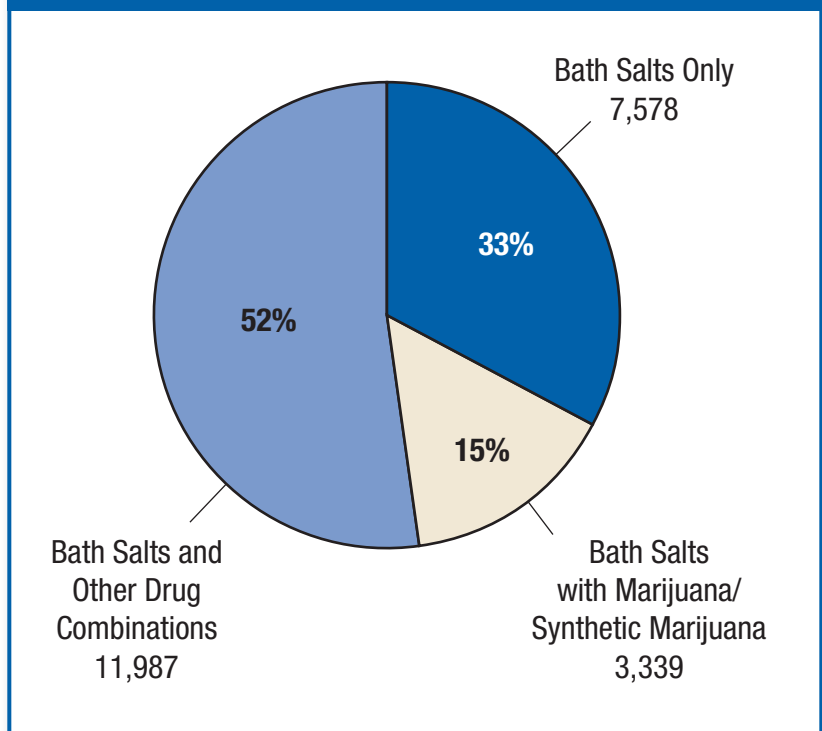


“Bath Salts” Were Involved in over 20,000 Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits in 2011

The term “bath salts” refers to a new group of drugs that contain one or more chemicals related to cathinone, an amphetamine-like stimulant.^{1,2} The white or brown powder is sold in packages made to look like they contain common household products, such as plant food or jewelry cleaner. They are usually labeled as a “legal high” or “not for human consumption” in an attempt to avoid being controlled as drugs of abuse. These drugs are very different than the products made to be added to bath water. Bath salts can be taken by mouth, inhaled, or injected. Adverse effects of bath salts include heart and blood vessel problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, psychosis, and death.²

The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) first detected a measurable number of emergency department (ED) visits involving bath salts in 2011.³ Of the nearly 2.5 million ED visits that involved drug misuse or abuse in 2011, bath salts were named in 22,904 visits. Thirty-three percent of these visits involved bath salts only, 15 percent involved bath salts combined with marijuana or synthetic marijuana, and 52 percent involved bath salts in combination with other drugs. Dangerous health effects, including the risk of addiction, make bath salt use a serious public health concern. For more information, see <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/synthetic-cathinones-bath-salts>.

Emergency Department Visits Involving Bath Salts, by Drug Combination: 2011



1. Bath salts include all substances that were specifically documented as ‘bath salts’ in the emergency department records.
2. Gunderson, E. W., Kirkpatrick, M. G., Willing, L. M., & Holstege, C. P. (2013). Substituted cathinone products: A new trend in “bath salts” and other designer stimulant drug use. *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, 7(3), 153-162.
3. These data on ED visits involving bath salts do not include prescription medications containing legal cathinones.

Source: 2011 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). DAWN is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits and drug-related deaths to track the impact of drug use, misuse, and abuse in the United States.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities. The **Data Spotlight** may be copied without permission. Citation of the source is appreciated. Find this report and those on similar topics online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

