



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Mike Beebe

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TO: Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, EMT'S

FROM: Joseph H. Bates, MD, MS
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SUBJECT: Medical Alert Regarding "Bath Salts"

DATE: February 1, 2011

The purpose of this memorandum is to alert all Arkansas physicians and other health care providers to a new chemical of abuse that is legally sold in Arkansas and throughout the U.S. labeled as "bath salt". The active ingredient in this product is structurally related to cathinone, the active alkaloid found in the Khat plant grown and used in Africa as a central nervous system stimulant. Cathinone analogs have been synthesized in other countries where their use has been recognized over the last few years. These chemicals have emerged in the U.S. as legal alternatives to methamphetamine and cocaine, but have been banned in the European Union and a few other countries worldwide.

The active chemical and related analogs are structurally related to cathinone. One such chemical is methylenedioxypyrovalerone, commonly called MDPV. It is known to produce effects similar to those produced by cocaine and amphetamine. Signs and symptoms reported, as observed in other states, are tachycardia, elevated blood pressure, mydriasis, anxiety, agitation, and euphoria. Some very dangerous effects reported are hallucinations, extreme paranoia, psychosis that may persist for several days post exposure, suicidal ideation, and rarely grand mal seizures.

These substances are sold under a variety of names as a type of bath salt and some names we know about are Cloud 9, White Diamond, Ivory Wave, White Lightning, Vanilla Sky, Scarface, Red Dove, and Hurricane Charlie. These products are an unregulated powder or crystalline substance that likely contain one or more of these synthetic cathinones. Nasal insufflation is the preferred route of use, but oral ingestion, smoking and injection have been reported. Cathinones promote the release of the neurotransmitters dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, and their toxicity results from excess sympathomimetic activity. These substances do not test positive for cocaine or amphetamine or any other substance when subjected to standard urine drug screen testing.

At present, there are no clinical laboratory tests available that will detect these chemicals in human specimens, but the State Crime Laboratory can detect them in the commercial products. The Arkansas Department of Health recommends that when health care providers encounter patients with symptoms and signs compatible with amphetamine or cocaine use, that "bath salts" be among the drugs/chemicals suspected of being used. Please report suspected cases to the Arkansas Poison and Drug Information Center at 1-800-376-4766.