

'Bath salts' drugs led to 23,000 ER visits in one year: US report

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Photo: New York State Government

These stimulants are especially dangerous when combined with other drugs, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Street drugs called "bath salts" were linked to nearly 23,000 emergency department visits in the United States in 2011, a new report says.

Bath salts are amphetamine-like stimulants that have become increasingly popular among recreational drug users in recent years. Despite the name, these synthetic drugs have nothing to do with the crystals you might sprinkle in a bathtub.

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report, released Tuesday, is the first national study to look at bath salts-related emergency department visits since the drugs appeared a few years ago.

"Although bath salts drugs are sometimes claimed to be 'legal highs' or are promoted with labels to mask their real purpose, they can be extremely dangerous when used," Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz, SAMHSA's chief medical officer, said in an agency news release.

"Bath salts drugs can cause heart problems, high blood pressure, seizures, addiction, suicidal thoughts, psychosis and, in some cases, death—especially when combined with the use of other drugs," she noted.

The report said that 67 percent of emergency department visits linked to bath salts also involved the use of another drug. Fifteen percent of the visits involved the use of bath salts with marijuana or synthetic forms of marijuana.

In 2011, there were nearly 2.5 million U.S. emergency department visits involving drug misuse or abuse, according to the report.

The [bath salts](#) report is based on data from the 2011 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) report. DAWN is a [public health surveillance](#) system that monitors drug-related [hospital emergency department](#) visits and drug-related deaths in the United States.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [bath salts](#).

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