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New Designer Drugs: The Facts and Risks

The terms Bath Salts, K2 and Spice have been getting media attention over the last few months. While there is much to be researched on the long term effects of these drugs, what is already known is that the immediate effects for someone under the influence of these drugs are serious and often times dangerous. Poison control centers and medical professionals around the country are increasingly reporting that patients are suffering adverse physical effects associated with abuse of these drugs, further compounding the problem. The following is information released by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center, who describes this drug as "An Emerging Domestic Threat". Here is what is known so far, and why employers, individuals and parents need to be aware of the effects of these drugs.

What is K2?

K2, also known as Spice, contains synthetic chemicals that were designed to mimic the effects of marijuana. Spice, a mixture of plant leaves and stems that have been laced with synthetic chemicals, is often smoked.

What does it feel like when under the influence K2 or Spice?

Though the mixture resembles the appearance of marijuana, the physical and psychological effects are different. Those that have taken the drug have reported experiencing acute anxiety, panic attacks, hallucinations, loss of concentration, and even seizures.

What are Bath Salts?

Bath Salts are artificial stimulants made to simulate the effects of methamphetamines or cocaine. Bath salts (not to be confused with what you would put in your bathtub) can be found in local smoke shops or even in small convenience stores. Sniffing or snorting the substance can consume the powdery "salt like" form.

What do Bath Salts feel like when under the influence?

The chemicals found in Bath Salts act as a central nervous system stimulant and the effects are similar to cocaine or methamphetamines. Someone on Bath Salts will experience a surge of energy and increased heart rate. However, they will also encounter other dangerous effects like agitation, insomnia, irritability, dizziness, depression, paranoia, delusions, seizures, panic attacks, impaired perception of reality, reduced motor control, decreased ability to think clearly, and even suicidal ideation.

Are these drugs illegal?

In 2011, the DEA made 5 of the chemicals commonly used to make Spice illegal, yet it still remains fairly easy to obtain. In October of 2011 the DEA also banned three of the chemicals used to make Bath Salts. Except as authorized by law, this action makes possessing and selling these chemicals, or the products that contain them, illegal in the United States. This action will remain in effect for at least one year while the DEA and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) further study whether these chemicals should be permanently controlled.

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