

What are

“batas “flakka,” in his system. Alpha-PVP

is a relatively new substance that

falls under the category of synthetic

cathinones. Due to a lack of regulation

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Are synthetic cathinones legal?

When synthetic cathinone products began to appear in convenience stores in the early 2000s they were not specifically banned by state or federal drug laws. They were sold legally as “plant food” or hygienic products – hence the name “bath salts” – and marked “not for human consumption.” In 2012, the Synthetic Drug Abuse Act placed many synthetic cathinones into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, the most prohibitive classification possible. However, this did little to curb access to synthetic cathinones among the general public: it simply shifted supply

to the internet and individual sellers. Moreover, manufacturers of synthetic cathinones easily skirt the law by making small changes to the chemical formulas, producing newer unscheduled, and unresearched, synthetic cathinones.

EXAMPLE PHRASING

“Federal and state laws banning synthetic cathinones are easily sidestepped. Manufacturers simply tinker with the chemical formulas and create newer synthetic cathinones that are not yet banned.”

What can be done to better manage synthetic cathinone use and its risks?

Focusing efforts and resources on banning substances and incarcerating sellers is ineffective and does little to curb supply. Alternative approaches to the challenges these substances present include:

1. Provide comprehensive drug education

This should not only alert people of the potential risks, but also provide strategies to reduce potential harm if they choose to use.

2. Provide free public, community-level access to drug checking services

Synthetic cathinones are often taken unknowingly. Products sold as “molly” – a slang term for MDMA – are often adulterated with “bath salts.”⁸ Making drug checking services publicly available through community outreach services would prevent many deaths.

3. Create research opportunities and regulation

Within the wide range of synthetic cathinones on the market today, some compounds may hold promising

applications within medicine that are currently unexplored. These substances should be evaluated by regulatory bodies for general health and safety concerns.

EXAMPLE PHRASING

“To better protect the public from the risks associated with synthetic cathinones, drug policy experts stress the importance of providing comprehensive drug education, as well as free, community-level access to drug checking services – so called “bath salts” are often taken unknowingly by those attempting to take MDMA or other drugs. Additionally, these substances should be evaluated by regulatory bodies for general safety concerns and potential medical applications.”

For more information, please see:

www.drugpolicy.org/drug-facts
www.drugpolicy.org/news
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Endnotes

1. https://www.erowid.org/references/refs_view.php?ID=8477
2. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13181-011-0193-z>
3. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/06/08/rudy-eugene-brian-de-leon-and-more-crazy-bath-salt-freakouts.html>
4. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-florida-face-biting-attack-20161123-story.html>
5. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2015/06/excited_delirium_deaths_in_police_custody_diagnosis_or_cover_up.html
6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3088378/>
7. <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/special-reports/causeway-attack/article1940863.html>
8. <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.neu.edu/science/article/pii/S0376871616000570>