

Winter 2011

Synthetic Drugs

Study Drugs

Wisconsin Poison Center  
[www.wisconsinpoison.org](http://www.wisconsinpoison.org)

**POISON**  
**Help**  
  
**1-800-222-1222**

## Synthetic drugs are dangerous and deadly

They're known as synthetic marijuana, fake cocaine or fake meth - legal equivalents to illegal drugs - but they cause alarming side effects generating a slew of calls to poison centers, spurring concern among doctors across the U.S.

America's 57 poison centers first received calls about synthetic marijuana in late 2009. During 2010, they received 2,915 calls. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30 this year, 5,083 calls have been made to poison centers. The synthetic marijuana products cost \$30-\$40 per 3 gram bag, in packages labeled as incense or potpourri and marketed under brand names like Spice, K2, Genie, Yucatan Fire, Sence, Smoke, Skunk and Zohai.



*Photo courtesy Bangor Police Department*

Late last year, poison centers began receiving calls about products marketed as bath salts sold on the Internet, gas stations and head shops. Packaging usually is a plastic bag filled with a white granular powder. The products are known as Vanilla Sky, Ivory Wave, White Lightning, Scarface and others. Side effects include an increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, agitation, hallucinations, extreme paranoia and delusions. Poison centers took more than 300 calls about the products in 2010. Calls jumped to more than 5,200 between January and September this year. In Wisconsin, we've received 46 calls as of Oct. 1.

Many states have responded to the rising use of bath salts by passing laws to make them illegal. In September, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration issued a ban of the chemicals used to make these dangerous drugs.

Wisconsin Poison Center wants you to be aware of the dangers of these products.



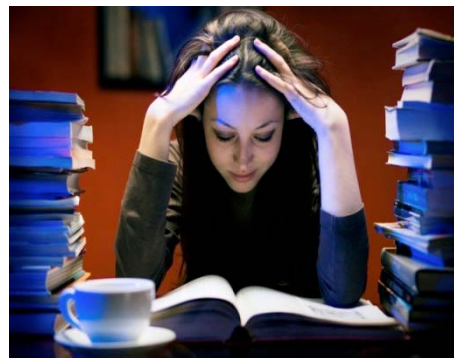
The following is information about what they are and the dangers surrounding them:

- Parents of teens should be on the lookout for such products in their children's bedrooms and backpacks. Be particularly skeptical of products labeled incense or bath salts.
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of drug use. Paranoia, changes in personality, agitation and anxiety are among the symptoms reported by users of these substances.
- Talk with family members about the dangers of these products. Don't be fooled by the ready availability and legal status of new designer drugs. These products are not a safe or harmless alternative to other illicit drugs of abuse. Many can cause hallucinations and agitation that poison center experts say represent the opposite of a mellow high. In the case of bath salts, for example, poison center officials report instances of severe paranoia that has caused users to harm themselves and others.

## Stay away from study drugs

College can be difficult. Peer pressure, tuition, professors, term papers, campus activities and the desire for academic excellence can make life for a college student quite overwhelming at times. Although the college experience can bring about growth, sometimes the pursuit of excellence can harm a student's health if study drugs are added to the mix.

Final exams just around the corner, the American Association of Poison Control Centers encourages parents to talk to their children about the dangers of popular study drugs and the symptoms they may cause.



Study drugs are drugs that are abused as study aids. Students believe study drugs enhance or focus concentration and increase stamina when they cram for tests or write papers.

The use of study drugs is not new. For years, college students have looked for ways to make studying easier, more efficient and more manageable. The drugs of choice are stimulants (uppers) and include:

- Caffeine: Historically, this has been limited to drinking multiple cups of coffee or tea to help students through all-nighters. The dose increases considerably, however, by taking caffeine pills or consuming multiple energy drinks. Caffeine pills can contain up to 200 mg. of caffeine per pill, two to three times the amount in a cup of coffee. Energy drinks also contain a large amount of caffeine, and some contain additional stimulants.
- Prescription medicines: Some students use ADHD medicine as a study drug. These medicines contain the stimulants dextroamphetamine or methylphenidate. For some people with undiagnosed or preexisting mental health issues, these prescription drugs can make their conditions worse. Chronic use also can lead to addiction. It's important for parents to remind their children to take their ADHD medicine correctly and never to take someone else's prescription drugs.



According to the medical experts at America's 57 poison centers, the following symptoms may indicate someone is abusing study drugs. Call Wisconsin Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 if someone experiences:

- Anxiety, nervousness, jitters or agitation.
- Tremors.
- Increased heart rate.
- Elevated blood pressure.
- Insomnia.
- Loss of appetite.
- Upset stomach with nausea and vomiting.

Keep the poison center number near your phone: 1-800-222-1222. Remember, you can call us to ask about these substances even if you have not been exposed to them. We are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and take both emergency and nonemergency calls.

