

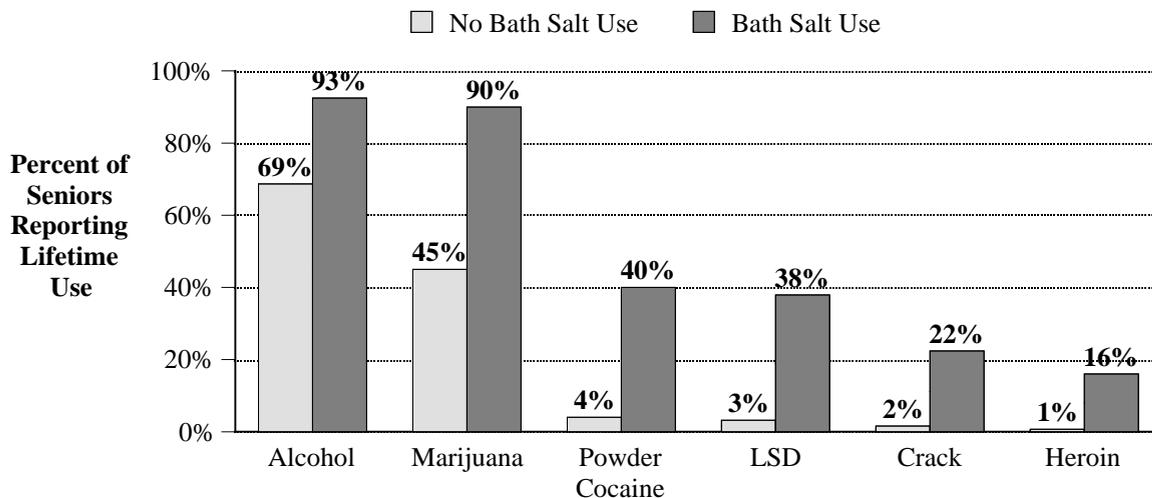
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

U.S. High School Seniors Rarely Use Bath Salts; Those Who Do More Likely to Use Alcohol and Other Drugs

In the first nationally representative study to look at self-reported bath salt use, only 1.1% of high school seniors reported any use in the last year. One-third (33%) of bath salt users reported using only once or twice in the last year, suggesting that many users are experimental users. However, nearly one-fifth of users (18%) reported using 40 or more times in the last year (data not shown). High school seniors who reported using bath salts in the past year were more likely than those who did not use bath salts to report ever using alcohol or other drugs. Lifetime use of either alcohol or marijuana was reported in over 90% of the bath salt users, compared to 69% and 45%, respectively, of those who had not used bath salts. Powder cocaine, LSD, crack, and heroin use were each at least ten times more prevalent among bath salt users compared with non-users (see figure below).* According to the authors, “while ‘bath salt’ use has been covered extensively by the media, use is not particularly prevalent among high school seniors in the US. However, it is important that we continue to monitor new drugs such as ‘bath salts’ in order to inform prevention and quickly detect potential epidemics” (p. 489).

Percentage of High School Seniors Reporting Lifetime Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs by Bath Salt Use in the Past Year, 2012-2013



*The use of hallucinogens other than LSD and the nonmedical use of stimulants, opioids, tranquilizers, and sedatives were 4 to 6 times more prevalent among seniors who had used bath salts in the past year. All differences were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

NOTES: “Students were not asked about specific ‘bath salts’ (e.g. mephedrone), and results are based on a nationally sample of high school seniors so findings (e.g. low prevalence) may not be generalizable to the rest of the US population.” “...[S]elf-reported use does not consider unintentional use, which appears to occur as ‘bath salts’ are now often present in ecstasy and ‘Molly’ powder, which is marketed as a pure version of ecstasy (MDMA)” (p. 489).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Palamar, Joseph J., “‘Bath Salt’ Use Among a Nationally Representative Sample of High School Seniors in the United States,” *American Journal on Addiction*, 24(6):488-491, 2015. For more information, contact Dr. Joseph Palamar at joseph.palamar@nyumc.org.