



ASSIST Drug information card

Synthetic Cathinones

Street names:

M-CAT, Meow Meow, Bath Salts, plant food, plant feeders

Price guide:

Refer to EDRS/IDRS

What is it?

Synthetic cathinones are a class of man-made stimulants that are closely related, chemically, to cathinone, (benzoylthamphetamine), a central nervous system stimulant that occurs naturally in the Khat plant. They include methylone, mephedrone, buphedrone and MDPV.

What does it look like?

Synthetic cathinones come in crystals, powdered or capsulized forms. When produced in crystalized form, synthetic cathinones resemble Epsom salt crystals (magnesium sulfate), and are therefore commonly referred to as 'bath salts'.

Synthetic cathinones also come in powdered form, which ranges in colour from white to brown, and varies in texture from fine powder to crushed glass.

How is it usually taken?

Synthetic cathinones may be snorted, swallowed, smoked or injected depending on the form. Crystalized synthetic cathinones are designed for smoking or injecting, whereas capsules are usually swallowed, and powder can be snorted

Immediate effects:

The effects of synthetic cathinones are felt immediately if smoked or injected, or within 15-30 minutes if snorted or swallowed. Depending on how much is used, the effects can last between 2-4 hours. Synthetic cathinones may produce the following effects:

- A sense of euphoria and wellbeing
- Intense connection to music and sense of intimacy with others
- Increased alertness, energy and talkativeness
- Increased libido
- Increased heart-rate, breathing and body temperature (sweating)
- Increased blood pressure and dilated pupils
- Blurred vision, dizziness and thirst
- Jaw clenching, teeth grinding and muscle tension in the face and jaw
- Inability to sleep, memory loss
- Decreased appetite

Higher doses or binge use may result in the following:

- Nose-bleeds (from snorting)
- Skin rashes
- Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- Agitation and aggressiveness
- Involuntary muscle jerking and muscle breakdown
- Nervousness, anxiety or paranoia
- High-blood pressure, stroke or heart attack
- Hallucinations
- Psychosis
- Seizures, death

More severe consequences may be more common among smoking or injection. Synthetic cathinones are highly toxic and the psychological effects are more concentrated than for the naturally occurring cathinones found in Khat.

Long-term health effects:

Long term health effects of synthetic cathinone use include:

- Poor sleep
- Dry mouth and other dental problems
- Poor concentration and memory
- Depression, anxiety
- Tremors and muscle stiffness
- Breathlessness
- Raised heart rate, blood pressure and chest pains
- Heart rate and kidney failure
- Risk of stroke
- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- Tolerance to the effects of the drug
- Dependence and withdrawal

Mixing Synthetic cathinones with other drugs:

Mixing synthetic cathinones with other stimulants (e.g., methamphetamine, cocaine or MDMA) can place additional stress on the heart increasing the risk of heart attack or stroke. It can also increase the risk of drug-induced psychosis.

Mixing synthetic cathinones with depressants (e.g., alcohol or cannabis) can increase the risk of toxicity by masking the stimulant effects, and can induce nausea and vomiting.

Other things to consider:

- Synthetic cathinones are a cheap to make and are commonly substituted for other stimulants, including methamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine. Individuals may unknowingly use synthetic cathinones.
- Synthetic cathinones are higher potency than normal cathinones, which means they have the potential for toxic reactions and there is the potential for a stronger come-down. In the days following use, individuals may experience restless sleep, tiredness, dizziness, low mood, memory loss, depression, anxiety, and paranoia. More potent delivery methods (e.g., injecting) are also more likely to result in dependence, psychosis and other more severe longer term physical and mental health problems.
- Many people have reported that synthetic cathinones create a strong desire or urge to re-take the substance; leading to faster rate of tolerance and dependence.
- Long term use of synthetic cathinones can impair dopaminergic function, resulting in depression and poor information processing skills.
- Synthetic cathinone use has led to a number of instances of drug-induced psychosis and death.

Harm reduction advice:

There is no safe level of synthetic cathinone use. However, if you choose to use, you might try the following steps to reduce your risk of harm:

- Be vigilant with your dose. Start with a small amount and allow the drug time to work before considering re-dosing.
- Eat, drink water, sleep, rest and recover
- Try to avoid using regularly to reduce the risk of long-term effects and dependence
- Try to avoid bingeing as it can worsen the comedown effects and increase the risk of drug-induced psychosis
- Synthetic cathinones are a powerful sexual stimulant, so practice safe sex
- Try to avoid injection
- If injecting, use sterile equipment and avoid sharing. Sharing equipment increases your risk of blood-borne viruses and illnesses, including tetanus, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS.

For additional information and resources, please visit [assistportal.com.au](https://www.assistportal.com.au)