

bath capsule

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Bath Capsule

A single-dose bath oil in a soft gelatin shell — the bath equivalent of a softgel capsule, dropped into the water where the shell dissolves and releases the oil. Also sold as bath pearls or bath beads. It is a small, old-fashioned format with one genuine formulation advantage and one serious safety problem.

What it is

A **soft gelatin or starch shell**, sometimes coloured and translucent, enclosing a measured dose of fragranced bath oil. Warm water dissolves the shell in a minute or two and the oil disperses.

Component	Typical
Shell	Gelatin, glycerin, water, colour; or a starch/seaweed alternative
Fill	Mineral oil, plant oils, esters, fragrance, sometimes vitamin E

The advantage is real: **the oil never meets air until the moment of use**. No headspace, no oxidation across a part-used bottle, no preservative needed, and an exact dose every time. It is the same reasoning that makes a monodose [Ampoule](#) worth its packaging.

The safety problem

They look like sweets. Small, glossy, brightly coloured, translucent, sometimes fruit-scented and shaped like pearls or fish — and stored, typically, in an open jar on the side of a bath, at a height a small child can reach.

Ingestion of bath capsules by young children is a recognised poison-centre call. The gelatin shell is harmless; the fill is a **fragranced oil**, and the meaningful risk with ingested oils in children is **aspiration** — oil entering the lungs, which causes a chemical pneumonitis and is a genuine medical emergency rather than a stomach upset.

The controls are simple and worth stating: **store them out of reach and out of sight, keep them in a closed container rather than an open decorative jar, and treat them as a cosmetic rather than as bathroom ornaments.** If a child swallows one, contact a poison centre — and do **not** induce vomiting, because that increases aspiration risk.

The other practical notes

- **Oil in a tub is slippery.** The fall risk described at [Bath Oil](#) applies in full. Non-slip mat, careful exit, rinse the tub.
- **Warm water, not hot,** or the shell dissolves before the bath is comfortable.
- **One is usually enough.** The dose is designed for a full tub.
- **Gelatin is animal-derived**, which matters for anyone avoiding it; starch and seaweed shells exist.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category **(02) bath preparations** — with **no premarket approval**. Colour additives, in both the shell and the fill, must be approved by FDA for the intended use, and certified colours must come from **FDA-certified batches**.

Notably, **no US cosmetic regulation requires child-resistant packaging or a "do not eat" warning** for these, despite the resemblance. The **Poison Prevention Packaging Act** administered by the Consumer Product Safety Commission covers certain hazardous household substances, and cosmetics of this kind generally fall outside it. The single-dose capsule format used for **laundry detergent** was subject to sustained regulatory and industry action for exactly this reason after a wave of childhood ingestions; bath capsules have never had comparable attention because the contents are far less toxic — the aspiration risk is the residual concern.

In the EU, permitted colorants come from the **Annex IV** closed positive list of 153 entries, and named fragrance allergens must be declared above 0.01% in rinse-off products — a list substantially expanded by Regulation (EU) 2023/1545.

Shelf life

Two to three years, which is long for an oil product precisely because the shell excludes air.

The failure modes are physical: shells **soften and stick together** in a humid bathroom, and **leak** if squashed or heated. A capsule that has gone tacky or lost its shape has been damp, and a jar of fused capsules should go. Store them dry, cool, sealed — and out of reach.

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- [Bath and Body](#) — the shelf this sits on, and the rest of it.
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- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.