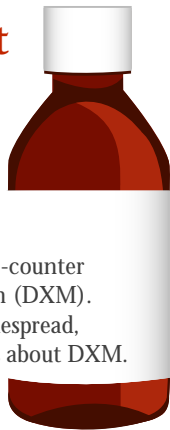


What Every Parent Needs to Know About Cough Medicine Abuse



Some young people are abusing over-the-counter medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM). While abuse of these products is not widespread, every parent should be aware of the facts about DXM.

Q: What is DXM?

DXM is a safe and effective cough suppressant ingredient found in over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicines. When used according to directions, products containing DXM produce few side effects and have a long history of safety and effectiveness.

Some teens are attempting to get high by taking much larger than recommended doses of DXM in the form of OTC cough syrup, tablets and gel caps. In these high doses, DXM can produce hallucinogenic and dissociative effects.

Q: What are dissociative effects?

Dissociative effects include distorted perceptions of sight and sound as well as feelings of detachment or separation from the environment and self.

Q: What are the effects of DXM abuse?

The effects of DXM abuse vary with the amount taken. DXM abusers describe a set of distinct “plateaus” ranging from a mild stimulant effect or excitement with distorted visual perceptions to a sense of complete dissociation from one’s body.

Physical signs of abuse can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, confusion, poor coordination, rapid heart rate and dizziness. At very high doses, DXM can cause inability to move arms or legs or to talk, slowed breathing and even death (from stopped breathing).

DXM is also sometimes abused with other drugs or alcohol, which can increase the dangerous physiological effects.



Q: What are slang terms for dextromethorphan?

Slang terms for dextromethorphan vary by product and region. The most common terms include: Dex, DXM, Robo, Skittles, Syrup, Triple-C and Tussin.

Terms for using dextromethorphan include: Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and skittling.

Q: How common is DXM abuse?

There are currently no adequate prevalence measures of DXM abuse, however, use is estimated to be low compared to other drugs. Abuse of cough medicines containing DXM is characterized as sporadic by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

There is little in current teen culture — music, movies, fashion and entertainment — that promotes or even mentions cough medicine abuse. The one exception is the Internet.



Q: What types of DXM sites are found online?

A number of web sites promote the abuse of DXM. The information on these sites ranges from recommending how much to take, suggesting other drugs to combine with DXM, instructing how to extract DXM from cough medicines, and even selling a powder form of DXM for snorting. Other sites display art, movies and music produced by people promoting DXM and other forms of drug abuse. You should be aware of what your teen is doing on the Internet, the web sites he or she visits and the amount of time he or she is logged on.

What Parents Can Do to Prevent Drug Abuse

Parents can make a positive difference in their teens’ lives. Research has shown that parents can influence their teens’ decisions about drugs.

Monitoring is an effective way you can help your teen stay drug-free, and an important thing to do — even if you don’t suspect your teen is using drugs. Monitoring means asking teens questions about where they’re going, what they’re doing, and whom they’re spending time with as well as keeping tabs on their Internet use by using web browser tools and software. Put some of these tips to use, and your kids will benefit with healthy lifestyles.

Know Where Your Teen Is

It’s important to know where your teen is and what he or she is doing. Research has shown that children without adult supervision are at significantly greater risk of truancy from school, stress, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior and substance abuse.

Sample questions to ask your teen: Where will you be this afternoon? Where are you going after practice?

Get Your Teen Involved in Activities

Research has shown that youths who participate in team sports are less likely to use marijuana than those who do not participate. Find out what adult-supervised activities — like after-school sports or clubs — interest your teen and help get him or her involved.

Sample questions: What sport interests you most? What after-school activities are offered at your school?

Know Your Teen’s Friends

Research from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America® reports that more than half of teens say they have close friends who get high regularly. Are these the close friends your teen hangs out with?

Know the Dangers of Drugs

To talk credibly and effectively about the dangers of drugs, parents need to know what they are. For example, the effects of DXM abuse can vary from vomiting to rapid heart rate to slowed breathing and even death. Teens will know when they’re being lied to — so know the facts. To learn about the various drugs teens can abuse — including DXM — and their risks, visit the Drug Resource at www.drugfreeamerica.org.

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Talk With Your Teen

Kids who say they learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are approximately 50 percent less likely to try drugs. Parents should talk often, listen regularly and communicate clearly that they do not want their kids using drugs. Remember: Your teen is counting on you to be the grown-up.

Sample questions: Did you know that abusing cough medicine can cause vomiting, slowed breathing and even death? Do you know what can happen if you mix drugs?

Recognize Signs Your Teen is Using Drugs

Parents don't always recognize their kids might be using drugs. While it can be hard to know, there are some general warning signs you can watch for. The fact is, any teen could be using drugs, so stay alert.

Signs your teen could be using drugs:

- Change in friends
- Change in sleeping pattern
- Declining grades
- Loss of interest in hobbies or favorite activities
- Hostile and uncooperative attitude
- Unexplained disappearance of household money
- Visits to pro-drug web sites

Helping a Child Who Is Using Drugs

Sit down with your child for an open discussion about alcohol and drug use. Openly voice your suspicions to your child but avoid direct accusations. Do not have this

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conversation when your child is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and make sure you sound calm and rational. Ask your child what's been going on in his or her life. Discuss ways to avoid using alcohol and other drugs in the future. If you need help during this conversation, consult another family member, your child's guidance counselor or physician.

Be firm and enforce whatever discipline you've laid out in the past for violation of house rules. You should discuss ways your child can regain your lost trust: calling in, spending evenings at home or improving grades.

If you think your child needs professional help, your doctor, hospital or school counselor may be able to help. Or you can call 1.800.662.HELP or visit <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>, the treatment referral hotline and web site maintained by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Be Pro-Active:

Drug use is a choice, but it is a choice you can influence. For example, teens report one of the greatest risks related to smoking pot is upsetting their parents. Parents need to talk with — not at — their teens about the dangers of using drugs. So, monitor your teen's time, friends and activities — even if you don't think your teen is using drugs.

If you suspect a poisoning, call
your local poison control center at
1.800.222.1222

To learn more about drug
prevention and to support the Partnership,
visit www.drugfreeamerica.org/dxm

For additional copies of this
brochure call 1.202.429.3529 or
visit www.chpa-info.org

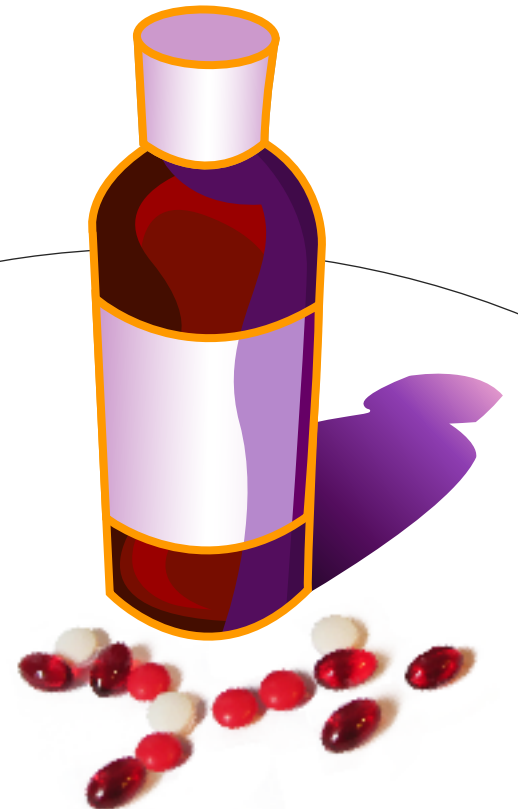
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Consumer Healthcare Products Association

A Parent's Guide to...

Preventing Teen Cough Medicine Abuse



Partnership for a Drug-Free America®