

FACT SHEET FOR ADULTS

COUGH & COLD MEDICATION CAN BE ABUSED!

Over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medications can be safe and effective when used as directed, but those that may be seeking a high are drawn to a dangerous ingredient found in nearly half of these medications called dextromethorphan (DXM). Some of these medications may also contain acetaminophen that can permanently harm the liver in an overdose.

What is dextromethorphan or DXM?

Dextromethorphan is the active ingredient in cough syrup that stops a cough. It is found in various forms, most commonly in capsule, caplet or liquid form.

What are the street names/slang terms for it?

DXM, Dex, Robo, Skittles, Syrup, Triple C, CCC, Tussin, Velvet

What does DXM do?

When taken in higher doses than directed, DXM may cause hallucinations, disorientation and paranoia. Symptoms of DXM abuse can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, confusion, poor coordination, rapid heartbeat, high blood pressure and dizziness. At very high doses, DXM can cause inability to move arms and legs or to talk, respiratory depression and rarely death.

How do kids obtain DXM?

It is easily available at home or at a store and can be purchased on the Internet. In fact, some Web sites encourage teenagers to abuse DXM and actually offer “recipes” suggesting very high doses to hallucinate.

How can I tell if my child is abusing DXM?

If you notice that your child is taking excessive amounts of a cold or flu medication, or if he or she continues to take medicine even after symptoms are gone. Likewise, if cough and cold medications seem to disappear from the medicine cabinet or if you find packages of cough and cold medications in the child’s room or backpack, he or she may be abusing the product.

Talking with your child and staying in touch with their lives helps keep them from abusing medications and drugs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For Medication Abuse: 800-222-1222

Brochures and General Information: 800-804-0909 (NH) or 603-271-2677

Website Resource: www.drugfreeNH.org

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Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Clearinghouse

NH Department of Health and Human Services

NHBDAS
BUREAU OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES
PROMOTING PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services
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