



Teens Abusing Easy-To-Get COLD MEDICINES

Teens don't always get their drugs in dark corners. In fact most of the time they score their drugs from friends, definitely from people they know. A growing concern is that teens are getting the stuff right off the shelf at the supermarket and/or drug store.

A growing number of teens are using over-the-counter cold remedies as recreational drugs. The appeal of *dextromethorphan*, an active ingredient in such products as Robitussin and Coricidin D, is one of growing concern. Teens are seeking euphoria by taking excessive doses of these products. What they often get instead is nausea, respiratory distress, slurred speech, sweating and hypertension. Some even end in coma and death.¹

Numerous internet sites glamorize the use of these drugs. The trips (high), known as *Dxing*, *Robo-trippin'*, *Roboed*, *Entombed*, *Tombed* and *tussin'*, heighten the sense of perceptual awareness, create an altered time perception, causes excitability, induces visual hallucinations and cause unresponsiveness to pain stimuli. "It was fun," one teen on a Web site said of his first Robo-trip. "But the day after, I felt like I was hit by a car." Another advantage highly publicized to kids on the internet with many over-the-counter drugs is, "cold medicines don't come back dirty in a UA screen (urinalysis)."

Recently dextromethorphan has taken a new twist. Powered forms of DX are being sold on the internet. Or as in the case of a high school Junior in northeast Ohio he and a friend acquired a recipe from the internet to cook their own stuff. After cooking the DX down into a powdered state they packed it into gel caps (bought off the net). The young man took a pill at approximately 8:00 am. By 9:00 am he was on his way to the hospital. He passed out in school, his heart stopped twice, he was having extreme difficulty breathing and was totally unresponsive to pain. Around 1:00 pm, after having his stomach pumped, given a charcoal treatment and intravenous fluids, he was conscious and able to talk. When asked why he had taken the stuff he said, "It messes with your head."² In Geauga County, Ohio from January to June 2004 11 youth were seen in Geauga Community Hospital ER for overdosing on DX.³

Cold medicine abuse is a trend with suburban youth. These medications can be purchased legally which makes it an even bigger challenge to track the abuse. We need to make law enforcement, pharmacists, store managers, school personnel, and parents aware of this increasing danger. In Ohio, law enforcement can charge with *intoxication, harmful to self and others* when someone is found under the influence. Pharmacists and store managers need to report to authorities when finding empty product boxes left on the shelves (The boxes often have metallic theft strips on them so the kids take the pills from the box so they can leave the store undetected.). School personnel and parents need to be aware that taking these drugs makes no rational sense. Kids don't think rationally when they take drugs. All they (the kids) want is to get high.

1 Drug Enforcement Administration, 2000

2 Lake County Narcotics Agency, 2001

3 Geauga County Health District, 2004

Effects: At recommended doses, dextromethorphan produces little or no CNS depression. At *recreational doses* (abuse), positive effects may include acute euphoria, elevated mood, dissociation of mind from body, creative dream-like experiences, and increased perceptual awareness. Other effects include disorientation, confusion, pupillary dilation, and altered time perception, visual and auditory hallucinations, and decreased sexual functioning. Recreational doses of approximately 100-200 mg have a mild, stimulant effect (likened to MDA); doses of 200-500 mg produce a more intoxicating effect (likened to being ‘drunk and stoned’) with the added result of mild hallucinations and a mild dissociate effect (likened to a low dose of ketamine) and an overall disturbance in thinking, senses and memory; while doses over 1000 mg may produce a fully dissociative effect (likened to a high dose of ketamine). Recreationally abused doses are capable of impairing judgment, memory, language, sensation to pain, and other mental/physical performances.

Side Effect Profile: Adverse effects with recommended antitussive doses are rare. However, nausea, other gastrointestinal disturbances, slight drowsiness and dizziness can occur. Following acute doses of between 250-1500 mg, the following clinical and overdose symptoms have been reported: excitation, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision, nystagmus, dilated pupils, body itching, rash, ataxia, sweating, hot/cold flashes, fever, hypertension, shallow respiration, urinary retention, diarrhea, opisthotonos (spasm where head and heels are bent back, and torso is bent forward), toxic psychosis (hyperactivity, marked visual and auditory hallucinations), coma, and an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature.⁴ Although not common death has resulted with these high levels of abuse.

DX Web Sites

Where the Kids Go

www.dextroverse.org
www.third-plateau.org
www.thedextro.com
www.coricidin.org
www.madkrec.com/alias/DXM/
www.erowid.org/chemicals/dxm/dxm.shtml

Inappropriate Harm Reduction Sites

www.dextromethorphan.ws
www.coricidin.org

Lab/Tox Screen for Coricidin

www.turnto10.com/healthcheck10/2324669/dex
www.absolutedrug.com

Site with Credible DX Information

www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/dextro_m/dextro_m.htm
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds/a682492.html
www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/drugs/dxm.asp

⁴ <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/job185drugs/dextromethorphan.htm>