

Myth: Abusing Over-The-Counter Drugs Are Safe

Teens may mistakenly believe that cough medicines sold in stores are less dangerous than street drugs. Even parents may underestimate the seriousness of DXM abuse and feel relief that their children are "only abusing cough syrup, not illegal drugs." Although cough medicine is sold in stores and is a regulated product, the reality is that taking large quantities of DXM has the potential to be extremely dangerous and even fatal. When taken in combination with other medicines or illicit drugs the risk increases significantly.

If A Teen Is Using

Sit down with the youth and openly voice your suspicions but avoid direct accusations. Do not have this conversation when the youth is under the influence of a substance. Stay calm and rational.

Seek medical attention immediately if the youth is unresponsive to your voice, vomiting, very pale or has a bluish tinge to the skin.

For More Information

To find out about services in your community, contact:

Discovery Youth & Family Addiction Services

- Victoria 250 721-2669
- Nanaimo 250 739-5790

Health Link BC: Call 811

Know the Facts

The best prevention is accurate information.
Research your information before sharing.

Vancouver Island Youth & Family Addiction Services



For More Information, please contact:

Discovery Youth & Family Addiction Services

- Victoria 250-721-2669
- Nanaimo 250-739-5790



Information about Cough Medicine (DXM)

What is Dextromethorphan (DXM)?

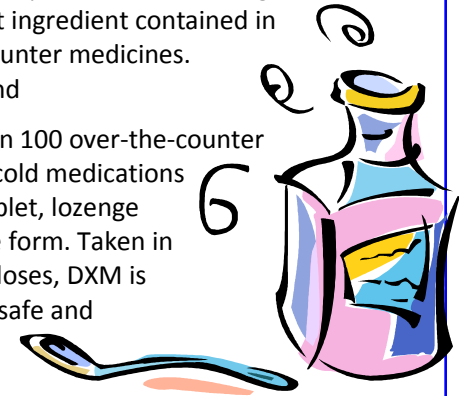
Dextromethorphan (DXM) is a cough suppressant ingredient contained in over-the-counter medicines. DXM is found

in more than 100 over-the-counter cough and cold medications in syrup, tablet, lozenge and capsule form. Taken in suggested doses, DXM is generally a safe and effective cough medication.

Dextromethorphan is found in over-the-counter cough medicines, including Alka-Seltzer Plus Cold and Cough, Dimetapp DM, Sudafed cough medicine, Robitussin, Tylenol Cough and Cold medicine, Vicks 44 Cough Relief medicine and many more. These products are easily available in home medicine cabinets, pharmacies / drug stores and grocery stores

What Is DXM Abuse?

Teens are able to get high by taking large doses of any over-the-counter cough medicine that contains DXM. It is cheap, easy to find and legal. However when DXM is misused and taken in high dosages, it can be extremely dangerous.



What Are The Effects Of DXM Abuse?

Some teens use DXM for its euphoric, hallucinogenic or dissociative effects when taken in larger than recommended doses. In large quantities or when combined with other medicines, DXM can cause:

- Impaired vision, slurred speech and nausea
- Impaired judgment and mental function
- Potential serious damage to brain, physical impairment and organ damage (e.g. liver)
- Coma and death

Prolonged use can cause memory problems, speech problems, high blood pressure and other issues related to the ability to think clearly.

Possible Early Indications of DXM Abuse

- Youth taking cough medications when it does not appear they are ill
- Mood swings, changes in normal habits, eating or sleeping patterns
- Diminished interest in usual activities
- Unexplained disappearances of money
- Medications disappearing from medicine cabinet

Slang Words for Dextromethorphan

Dex, DXM, Robo, Skittles, Syrup, Triple-C, Vitamin D, Tussin. Terms for using dextromethorphan include Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and Skittling. Youth using DXM are sometimes called syrup heads or robotards

What Can You Do?

Talk With Teens

Talk to teens in a way that will encourage conversation. Ask them what they know about DXM and what they think about other teens using it. Ask them if they know the risks.

Youth are still looking to adults for guidance and your input is important. Let them know your thoughts and concerns. Teens can tell when they are being lied to and your credibility is important so know the facts about DXM when you talk with teens.

Parents, caregivers and others working with youth need to talk with - not at - teens about the dangers of using over-the-counter and other drugs.

Know Where Teens Are Spending Time & What They Are Doing

It is important to know where teens are spending time and what they are doing. Research has shown that youth that are well connected with a significant adult are at less risk of truancy from school, stress, risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse.

The internet is a wonderful source of information and social interaction for youth. It is also an avenue where youth are sharing information about DXM and how to use it to become intoxicated. Stay connected with teens about what kind of sites they are visiting and participating in.

Tips for Parents & Caregivers

- ☑ Keep channels of communication open
- ☑ Know the facts about DXM and other over-the-counter drugs
- ☑ Help youth to understand the dangers of abusing DXM
- ☑ Watch for significant changes in behaviours
- ☑ Monitor medication stocks in the home & avoid overstocking medications
- ☑ Model responsible use of medications
- ☑ Know the slang terms for DXM and its use and be alert to them
- ☑ Be aware of the internet websites that teens in your care are frequenting

Tips for Schools & Those Who Work With Youth

- ☑ Know the facts about DXM and other over-the-counter drugs and medicines
- ☑ Include this information in substance abuse prevention sessions, stressing the risks and harms associated with these drugs
- ☑ Keep channels of communication open
- ☑ Know the slang terms for DXM and its use and be alert to them
- ☑ Be aware of the internet websites that teens are frequenting in class
- ☑ Watch for significant changes in behaviours and ability to concentrate