

What can be done to prevent drug abuse?

Talk with your teen

Young adults 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 children using drugs.

Sample questions to ask your teen: *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 the signs of drug abuse

Signs of drug abuse include:

- 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



MYTH: Over-the-counter medicines cannot be as harmful as illegal drugs.



FACT: DXM, an ingredient found in over-the-counter cough medicines, is just as dangerous as illegal drugs. Abusers are at risk of serious harm, and possibly even death.

What can I do if I suspect drug use?

- Sit down with the child for an open discussion about alcohol and drug use.
- Openly voice your suspicions but avoid direct accusations.
- Ask the 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 with this conversation, or if you believe your child needs professional help, contact your doctor, hospital or school counselor.

Call **1-800-222-1222**
if you suspect a poisoning or
drug overdose.

Learn more about drug
abuse prevention at
www.drugfreeamerica.org.

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) provides free, confidential treatment recommendations for poisonings via a toll-free hot line.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago
Healthcare Council.

Adapted from *A Parent's Guide to...Preventing
Teen Cough Medicine Abuse*, a brochure from the
Partnership for a Drug-Free America®

Your Guide to Preventing Cough Medicine Abuse



www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org
1-800-222-1222



Facts about Cough Medicine Abuse

Many young people are abusing over-the-counter medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM). Learn the signs and symptoms so you can help prevent the abuse.

Q: What is DXM?

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



When used according to directions, products containing DXM have few side effects and have a long history of safety and effectiveness.

Q: How can DXM be harmful?



Some young adults are trying to “get high” by taking much larger than recommended doses of DXM in the form of OTC cough syrup, tablets and gel

caps. At these high doses, DXM abusers can hallucinate.

Q: What are the effects of DXM abuse?

The effects of DXM abuse vary, depending on the amount taken.

Physical signs of abuse can include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Confusion
- Poor coordination
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness

At very high doses, DXM can cause inability to move arms or legs, and can make it hard to talk. It also can cause slowed breathing, which can decrease the amount of oxygen flowing to the brain. It can even cause **death**.

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

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
- Tussin

Use of DXM may be called Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and skittling.



How can parents and caregivers prevent DXM and other drug abuse?

Research shows that parents can influence their children’s decision about using drugs. What to do:

Know where your teen is

It’s important to know where your teen is, and what he or she is doing.

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

Get your teen involved in activities

Find out what adult-supervised activities interest your teen and help get him or her involved.

Sample questions to ask your teen: *What sports interest you most? What after-school activities are offered at your school?*

Know your teen’s friends

Research reports that more than half of all teens say they have close friends who get high regularly. Are these the close friends of your teen?

Know the dangers of drugs

Parents need to be able to talk effectively about the dangers of drugs. To learn about the effects of DXM or other drug abuse, call the Illinois Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222** to speak with specially trained health care professionals.