

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you think your teen needs professional help, your doctor, hospital, or school nurse, or counselor may be able to help. Or you can call 1.800.662.HELP or visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov, the treatment locator hotline and website of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. If you suspect a poisoning, call Poison Help at 1.800.222.1222.

To learn more about medicine abuse and to get help for your family, visit Partnership for Drug-Free Kids at drugfree.org or call the toll-free parents helpline at 855-378-4373.

STOPMEDICINEABUSE

Additional copies of this brochure can be ordered free of charge from StopMedicineAbuse.org.



CONSUMER HEALTHCARE
PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION

PREVENTING TEEN Cough Medicine Abuse



A PARENT'S GUIDE

STOPMEDICINEABUSE.ORG



WHAT IS COUGH MEDICINE ABUSE?

Over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine abuse is taking large doses of cough medicine to get high. The “high” is caused by dextromethorphan, which is often abbreviated DXM, a common active ingredient found in many cough medicines. This sort of abuse — whether it’s called cough medicine abuse or dextromethorphan or DXM abuse — can be dangerous.

What are slang terms for dextromethorphan?

The most common terms include:

DXM

Dex

Robo

Skittles

Syrup

Triple-C

Tussin

Terms for abusing dextromethorphan include:

Robo-ing

Skittling

Robo-tripping

► **SLANG TERMS** for dextromethorphan vary by product and region. Adults should be familiar with all of them.



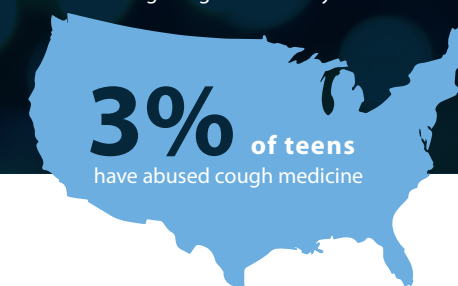
SIDE EFFECTS FROM DXM ABUSE INCLUDE:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Rapid heart beat
- Impaired physical coordination
- Double or blurred vision
- Drowsiness
- Numbness of fingers and toes
- Disorientation

How common is cough medicine abuse?

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse's 2019 Monitoring the Future survey,

3 percent of teens from across the country and of all backgrounds, self-report they have abused cough medicine to get high in the last year.



Where are teens finding information about cough medicine abuse?

Often, these teens find information about how to abuse cough medicine on the Internet. A number of websites promote the abuse of cough medicines containing DXM. Some of these sites even recommend how much to take; suggest other drugs to combine with DXM; instruct how to extract DXM from cough medicines and promote drug abuse in general. Be aware of what your teen does on the Internet, the websites he or she visits, and the amount of time he or she is online.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO
PREVENT COUGH MEDICINE ABUSE

Educate Yourself

- Educate yourself about cough medicine abuse and share this information with others who are in contact with your teen, such as school administrators, coaches, and counselors.

Talk to Your Teens

- Be clear that you do not want your teen taking medicine without your knowledge.
- Teach your teens and younger children to respect medicines. Medicines are important tools in healthcare, but they must be used according to directions.
- Make sure your teen understands that abusing cough medicine—just as abusing illegal drugs — can be very dangerous.

Safeguard Medications

- Know what medicines are in your home and take notice if they go missing.
- If your child needs medicines during school hours, speak with school officials about medicine policies.

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. The fact is, any teen could be using drugs. As a general rule, changes that are sudden or extreme may be a warning sign.

- ▶ **SIGNS** your teen could be using drugs include:
- Change in friends
 - Change in eating or sleeping patterns
 - Changes in physical appearance and hygiene
 - Declining grades
 - Empty drug or medicine containers or drug paraphernalia
 - Loss of interest in hobbies or favorite activities
 - Hostile and uncooperative attitude
 - Unexplained disappearance of household money
 - Unusual chemical or medicinal smells on your child or in his or her room

What cough medicines contain dextromethorphan, or DXM?

There are over 100 OTC medicines that contain DXM, either as the only active ingredient or in combination with other active ingredients. Examples include:

Alka-Seltzer Plus Cold & Cough Formula
Coricidin HBP Cough and Cold
Dimetapp DM
Mucinex DM tablets
PediaCare cough medicines
certain Robitussin cough products
Sudafed cough products
TheraFlu Cough products
Triaminic cough products
Tylenol Cough and Tylenol Cold products
Vicks 44 Cough Relief products
Vicks DayQuil and NyQuil LiquiCaps

A number of store brands contain dextromethorphan as well. To know if a product contains DXM, look for “dextromethorphan” in the active ingredient section of the OTC Drug Facts label. You can also look for an educational icon on the packaging of most OTC cough medicines containing dextromethorphan.

💡 MORE TIPS FOR
RAISING DRUG-FREE TEENS

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 young people questions about where they're going, what they're doing, and with whom they're spending time, as well as keeping tabs on their Internet use by using web browser tools and software designed to block certain sites. Put some of these tips to use, and your kids will benefit.

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.

Introduce Your Teen To Adult Role Models

Find out what adult-supervised activities — like clubs or after-school sports — interest your teen and help get him or her involved. Connect with other adults who can help teens avoid the dangers of drugs, and reinforce the benefits of healthy, drug-free living.



Know Your Teen's Friends

Research for Partnership for Drug-Free Kids (drugfree.org) shows that teens are more likely to try drugs if they have friends who get high. Parents need to know the friends with whom their children are spending time.

Helping a Teen Who Is Using Drugs

The goal is to prevent a drug abuse problem in the first place. If you fear, however, that your teen may have a problem, sit down with your child for an open discussion about alcohol and drug use. Openly voice your suspicions but avoid direct accusations. Do not have this conversation when your teen is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and make sure you sound calm and rational. Ask your teen what has 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, ask another family member, your child's guidance counselor, or a physician.

Be firm and enforce whatever discipline you've laid out in the past for breaking house rules. You also should discuss ways your teen can regain your lost trust, such as calling in, spending evenings at home, or improving his or her grades.