



Drug Fact Sheet

DXM

WHAT IS DXM?

Dextromethorphan is a cough suppressant found in more than 120 over-the-counter cold medications, either alone or in combination with other drugs such as analgesics (e.g., acetaminophen), antihistamines (e.g., chlorpheniramine), decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine), and/or expectorants (e.g., guaifenesin). The typical adult dose for cough is 15 to 30 mg taken three to four times daily. The cough-suppressing effects of DXM persist for 5 to 6 hours after ingestion. When taken as directed, side effects are rarely observed.

WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

DXM users can obtain the drug at almost any pharmacy or supermarket, seeking out the products with the highest concentration of the drug from among all the OTC cough and cold remedies that contain it. DXM products and powder can also be purchased online.

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

- CCC, Dex, DXM, Poor Man's PCP, Robo, Rojo, Skittles, Triple C, and Velvet

What does it look like?

DXM can come in the form of:

- Cough syrup, tablets, capsules, or powder



How is it used?

DXM is misused in high doses to experience euphoria and visual and auditory hallucinations. People take various amounts depending on their body weight and the effect they are attempting to achieve. Some people ingest 250 to 1,500 milligrams in a single dosage, far more than the recommended therapeutic dosages described above.

Illicit use of DXM is referred to on the street as "Robo-tripping," "skittling," or "dexing," derived from the products that are most commonly misused, Robitussin and Coricidin HBP. DXM misuse has traditionally involved drinking large volumes of the OTC liquid cough preparations. More recently, however, misuse of tablet and gel capsule preparations has increased.

These newer, high-dose DXM products have particular appeal for people. They are much easier to consume, eliminate the need to drink large volumes of unpleasant-tasting syrup, and are easily portable and concealed, allowing a person to continue to misuse DXM throughout the day, whether at school or work.

DXM powder, sold online, is also a source of DXM for misuse. (The powdered form of DXM poses additional risks to the person due to the uncertainty of composition and dose.)

DXM is also distributed in illicitly manufactured tablets containing only DXM or mixed with other drugs such as pseudoephedrine and/or methamphetamine.

DXM is misused by individuals of all ages, but its misuse by teenagers and young adults is of particular concern. This misuse is fueled by DXM's OTC availability and extensive "how to" information on various websites.

What is its effect on the mind?

Some of the many psychoactive effects associated with high-dose DXM include:

- Confusion, inappropriate laughter, agitation, paranoia, euphoria, and hallucinations
- Other sensory changes, including the feeling of floating and changes in hearing and touch

Long-term misuse of DXM is associated with severe psychological dependence. People who misuse DXM describe the following three dose-dependent "plateaus":

What is its effect on the body?

DOSE (MG)	BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS
100-200	Mild Stimulation
200-400	Euphoria and hallucinations
500-1500	Distorted visual perceptions Loss of motor coordination Out of body sensations

DXM intoxication involves:

- Overexcitability, lethargy, loss of coordination, slurred speech, sweating, hypertension, nausea, vomiting, and involuntary spasmodic movement of the eyeballs

The use of high doses of DXM in combination with alcohol or other drugs is particularly dangerous, and deaths have been reported. Approximately 5-10 percent of Caucasians are poor DXM metabolizers and at increased risk for overdoses and deaths. DXM taken

with antidepressants can be life threatening.

OTC products that contain DXM often contain other ingredients such as acetaminophen, chlorpheniramine, and guaifenesin that have their own effects, such as:

- Liver damage, rapid heart rate, lack of coordination, vomiting, seizures, and coma

To circumvent the many side effects associated with these other ingredients, a simple chemical extraction procedure has been developed and published online that removes most of these other ingredients in cough syrup.

What are its overdose effects?

DXM overdose can be treated in an emergency room setting and generally does not result in severe medical consequences or death. Most DXM-related deaths are caused by ingesting the drug in combination with other drugs. DXM-related deaths also occur from impairment of the senses, which can lead to accidents.

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Depending on the dose, DXM can have effects similar to marijuana or ecstasy. In moderate to high doses its out-of-body effects are similar to those of ketamine or PCP.

What is its legal status in the United States?

DXM is a legally marketed cough suppressant that is neither a controlled substance nor a regulated chemical under the Controlled Substances Act.