



StopMedicineAbuse.org

Home To Homeroom Educational Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Home to Homeroom?

Home to Homeroom is an educational program that teams parents with the medical expert in their teen's school – the school nurse – to help prevent and address teen cough medicine abuse. Parents play a pivotal role in keeping kids drug-free; research shows that kids who have regular conversations with their parents about the risk of drug abuse are up to half as likely to abuse.

The program is a partnership between the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) to provide parents with tools to help them address teen medicine abuse.

What tools and resources does Home to Homeroom offer to parents?

Ongoing education and communication are the keys to prevention. Home to Homeroom provides parents with advice and tools on how to integrate medicine abuse into regular "drug" talks with teens, how to keep the dialogue going, and how to find resources to support at-risk teens.

- **Home to Homeroom Parent Toolkit:** Free downloadable brochure and tip sheet with answers to parents' most frequently asked questions. School nurses will also receive this toolkit and other supporting materials to assist them when providing information to parents about the risks of teen medicine abuse.
- **Home to Homeroom Communities:** Growing social networks for information sharing and support—available at the [StopMedicineAbuse](#) Facebook page and Twitter feed [@StopMedAbuse](#)—provide a forum for parents to share their concerns, questions, and experiences with each other.
- **Home to Homeroom Digest:** Articles and advice from school nurses with ready-to-use, practical tips aimed at helping parents prevent medicine abuse in their family.

What else should parents do to learn about Home to Homeroom and medicine abuse?

Parents should explore this web site to learn more about Home to Homeroom and the variety of resources and tips that can help them start and maintain a dialogue with their teens about the risks of medicine abuse.

If parents suspect their child may have a problem with substance abuse, they should talk to their child's school nurse or other health professional about getting the right professional support.



Parents can also become engaged in efforts to help raise awareness on the dangers of teenage cough medicine abuse by joining online communities accessible via the Internet. Examples of programs include:

- [Five Moms Campaign](#)
- [Stop Medicine Abuse Facebook Fan Page](#)
- [TimeToTalk.org](#)
- [Twitter: @StopMedAbuse](#)

How prevalent is teen cough medicine abuse in America?

Drug abuse among teens has long been a challenging issue for parents and other adults. While alcohol and marijuana abuse, for example, are fairly well known by parents, one type of substance abuse has largely flown under their radar screens: teen medicine abuse.

Multiple national surveys point to the abuse of both prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, such as cough medicine, as a troubling substance abuse problem among teens.

- In the 2009 Monitoring the Future report, six percent of high school teens admit to having abused cough medicine to get high in the past year.
- According to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's 2009 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), a nationally projectable survey of 9th graders through 12th graders in the United States, thirty-three percent of respondents know someone who has abused cough medicine.

What is the ingredient in OTC cough medicines that teens are abusing?

The ingredient in OTC cough medicines that the teens are abusing is dextromethorphan, or DXM. While DXM-containing medicines are safe and effective when used as directed, they can be dangerous when abused in extreme amounts to get high.

Cough medicine abuse does not happen by accident; it involves intentionally taken excessive amounts of medication, sometimes 25 to 50 times the recommended dosage, which translates to multiple bottles or packages of medicine at one time. And often, teens are abusing cough medicines with prescription drugs, illegal drugs, or alcohol.

What are potential side effects of DXM if it is abused at high doses?

At recommended doses, OTC cough medicines containing dextromethorphan provide cough relief and are safe and effective when used as directed. When abused—sometimes at 25–50 times the recommended dose—dextromethorphan-containing cough medicines can cause strong visual hallucinations, mild distortions of color and sound, out-of-body sensations, confusion, slurred speech, or the loss of motor control.

The effects can be worsened if the DXM-containing cough medicine being abused also contains other ingredients to treat more than just coughs or if it is being abused in combination with other medications, or taken with alcohol and illegal drugs.

What are some the warning signs of cough medicine abuse?

Cough medicine abuse is a deliberate behavior. Teenagers are intentionally trying to get high by taking large amounts of cough medicine containing dextromethorphan.

Signs that abuse is taking place may include:

- Empty cough medicine boxes or bottles in the trash or a child's room, or boxes or bottles missing from the medicine cabinet;
- Visiting pro-drug web sites that provide information on how to abuse dextromethorphan and other substances;
- Changes in friends, physical appearance, or sleeping or eating patterns;
- Declining grades;
- 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; or
- Hearing your child use certain slang terms for DXM abuse, such as Skittling, Tussing, Robo-Tripping, Triple Cs, and Dex

If parents suspect their child may have a problem with substance abuse, they should talk to their child's school nurse or other health professional about getting the right professional support.

What should parents know about dextromethorphan and abuse?

Parents need to know that they are the most powerful voice in their teens' lives, especially concerning attitudes toward substance abuse. Parents should:

1. Learn about the issue and have regular conversations with their teens about the dangers of cough medicine abuse.
2. Safeguard their medicine cabinet and know exactly what medicines they have and how much medicine is in every bottle or package.
3. Monitor their teens' Internet usage to ensure their teens are not visiting web sites or online communities that advocate drug abuse.
4. Know where to go for help if they suspect their teens may be abusing. The local school nurse is an expert in the school who can help. In addition, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America has a resource, TimeToAct.org. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration also have a national treatment locator at dasis3.samhsa.gov.

This information is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to substitute medical advice.