

Medicine Abuse

Each generation of kids looks for new ways to get high. Recent trends indicate they are increasingly turning to prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Teens report getting many of these medicines from home medicine cabinets and mistakenly believe that abusing them is “safer” than other drugs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 20 percent of teens say they have taken a prescription drug without having a prescription for it themselves, and 5 percent report abusing OTC cough medicine to get high.

While millions of Americans safely rely on OTC cough medicine to temporarily relieve their symptoms, some teens intentionally take large amounts – sometimes more than 25 times the recommended dose of these medicines – to get high. This means some teens ingest multiple packages or bottles of OTC cough medicines that contain dextromethorphan (DXM), the active ingredient in most OTC cough medicines. Unfortunately, when taken in excessive amounts, DXM can cause serious side effects including rapid heartbeat, high blood pressure, memory problems, nausea, and vomiting.

President Trump proclaimed October 2019 as National Substance Abuse Prevention Month. He says, “Across our country, far too many families and communities have felt the devastation created by substance abuse. We remember all who have been lost to this affliction and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of our fellow Americans. Together, we will overcome this tragic crisis gripping our Nation and guarantee that future generations know the blessings of a drug-free life.

One of the most pressing challenges we are facing is how to overcome the opioid crisis in our Nation. From 1999 to 2017, our national family lost more than 399,000 loved ones to opioid overdoses. I am heartened to share that recent data shows a projected decrease of 4 percent in overdose deaths in the United States from 2017 to 2018, and many of our hardest-hit States and counties may see even more significant declines. While we have made progress in our fight, the illicit opioids, heroin, fentanyl, and methamphetamine flooding our communities continue to fuel addiction.

Through our united efforts to prevent the damaging effects of substance abuse, we will ensure a happier, healthier, and more prosperous future. I call on parents, educators, mentors, employers, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officials, faith and community leaders, and all Americans to join me in the fight to finally resolve this crisis.”

Help prevent medicine abuse:

1. **TALK** to your teen about prescription and OTC cough medicine abuse. Teens who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are 50 percent less likely to use drugs.
2. **SAFEGUARD** your medicine cabinets. Take steps to protect your teens by safeguarding all the medicines in your home. Know what you have and how much, so you will know if anything is missing, and take any medicines you no longer need to the Unwanted Medication Collection dropoff boxes, either at the Decatur Police Department or Kaup Pharmacy in Berne.
3. **SHARE** what you have learned.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.