

Purple Drank

“Purple drank” (also known as “drank”, “lean”, “syrup”, “sizzurp”, “Texas Tea” and Barre”) is composed of codeine, promethazine (a prescription antihistamine) and soda (usually Sprite® or Mountain Dew®). Occasionally Jolly Rancher Candy® is also added.

Codeine is an opiate, in the same class as morphine, heroin, hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin®), but less potent. It produces sedation and euphoria, and is used to relieve pain, although less commonly than before the introduction of hydrocodone. Codeine is also an effective antitussive (cough suppressant) and is sold as a prescription liquid/syrup by itself and in combination with promethazine. However, it is often prescribed in combination with promethazine, a powerful antihistamine meant to address cold symptoms. However, the combination of codeine and promethazine is [synergistic](#) and therefore the risk of respiratory suppression and arrest is greater than with codeine alone. Three hip-hop artists, DJ Screw, Big Moe and Pimp C, have died as the result of drinking purple drank.



Codeine/promethazine cough syrup



“Purple Drank”

The use codeine syrup as an intoxicant has been a common practice for decades. However, the abuse of “drank” seems to have begun in the southern United States as early as the 1990s. It is most common within the Hip Hop music culture, and has been the subject of several songs, including Three 6 Mafia’s [“Sippin' on Some Syrup](#), and, in 2012, the Kendrick Lamar single [“Swimming Pools \(drank\)”](#). In the video shown [here](#) the artist Lil Wayne can be seen talking

about his use of “drank”, the pleas of his associates to stop doing so, and some of the withdrawal symptoms resulting from the abrupt discontinuation of the substance.

Unfortunately, confusion regarding the ingredients of purple drank sometimes occurs because a soft drink, [Drank®](#) (as well as other brands) is also available. However, the soft drinks contain no illicit drugs. If an individual who is used to this beverage mistakenly ingests the variety of drank that contains codeine and promethazine, the result could be intoxication, arrest or even death.