



Newsletter

November 2016

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Over-The-Counter (OTC) Cough Medicine Abuse

Marijuana, prescription drugs and alcohol use amongst youth is at the forefront of prevention and intervention discussions in many of our communities. But did you know that there is a legal, over-the-counter medicine that teens are using to get high? **1 in 8 teens has reported getting high on over-the-counter cough medicine (Partnership for Drug Free Kids)**. Equally alarming, only 48 % of teens strongly agree that taking cough medicine to get high is risky (Partnership for Drug Free Kids).



Most parents and kids assume that OTC medicines are safe however, just as prescription drugs can be misused and abused, when taken in extremely high doses, OTC medicines can likewise pose dangerous risks. Cough medicine abuse is taking extremely large doses of over-the-counter cough medicine to get high. The “high” is caused by taking a large amount of dextromethorphan (DXM), an ingredient in nearly 100 cough and cold products sold in drug stores, grocery stores and other retailers. When taken correctly, cough and cold medicines safely treat the symptoms of common colds and flu, but when taken in higher doses (as much as 10-50 times the suggested amount), when symptoms aren’t present, the brain can be affected in ways very similar to street drugs. The cough medicine may be mixed with soda, Gatorade or other drinks to disguise the distinct taste of cough and cold medicines. Likewise, some of these cough medicines come in the form of liquid capsules and tablets that are either swallowed or crushed and mixed in with drinks. Whether drinking an entire bottle of cough syrup or swallowing a large dose of DXM via cold and cough tablets or capsules, the dangers are the same. Adults should be familiar with common terms and slang terms for dextromethorphan, with the most common being, DXM, DEX, Rob, Skittles, Syrup and Triple-C. Terms for using dextromethorphan include: Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and Skittling.

One avenue in which teens learn about cough medicine abuse is via the Internet. A number of disreputable websites promote the abuse of OTC cough medicines containing DXM. Information on these sites includes recommending how much to take, suggesting other drugs to combine with OTC cough medicine and promoting drug abuse in general. What these websites don’t offer is information that outlines the dangers of abusing DXM. Effects of over-the-counter cough medicine abuse includes:

- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Blurred Vision
- Slurred Speech
- Loss of Physical Coordination
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Drowsiness
- Disorientation

In some cases, affects can include hallucinations. The severity of side effects increases when cough medicine is abused in combination with other medicine, alcohol or street drugs.

Teens cite a variety of reasons for abusing cough medicine including DXM is easy to get, it is cheap, it “seems safer” and it is easier to hide from parents. According to surveys, even amongst parents who earnestly talk to their kids about drug abuse, fewer than one in five think to mention DXM abuse. The best defense that parents have against DXM abuse is to talk to their kids about the risks and dangers associated with cough medicine abuse. Below are further ways parents can help steer kids away from intentionally abusing OTC cough medicine:

- Safeguard both prescription and OTC medications such as cough medicine by keeping them locked up.
- Set an Example: Use prescription and OTC medications only as directed.
- Stop the Myth: Getting high with prescription drugs and OTC cough medicine is NOT safer than getting high with illegal street drugs.
- Help your child make good decisions. **YOU DO HAVE THE POWER TO INFLUENCE YOUR KIDS.**
- Monitor, supervise and set boundaries with your kids.
- Connect with your kids by getting and staying closely involved in their lives.

References: Partnership for Drug Free Kids; National Institute on Drug Abuse; Drug Enforcement Administration

Teens and Technology Safety

Technology has become a game changer for parents and any person working with youth. Technology provides many opportunities for research, education, global communication and so much more. However technology use can make adolescents susceptible to interactions with predators and cyberbullying. Parents and even schools are now faced with the challenge of monitoring adolescent technology use.

Technology and Social Media Use

According to a 2015 Pew Research Center report, “Teens are diversifying their social network site use. A majority of teens — 71% — report using more than one social network site out of the seven platform options they were asked about. Among the 22% of teens who only use one site, 66% use Facebook, 13% use Google+, 13% use Instagram and 3% use Snapchat.” Though Facebook remains one of the most popular social media sites, its popularity is declining among younger teens. Only 44% of 13 year olds reported using Facebook. Teens are accessing the Internet through smart phones, laptop and desktop computers, gaming consoles and tablets.

Listed below are a few trending apps among teens:

SnapChat – Timed photo and video sharing with messaging ability to controlled list of recipients.

Receiver can screen shot messages and images.

Instagram – Social media and photo sharing app with public default setting

Twitter – Post brief messages, photos and videos for others to view

Yik Yak – Location based social networking app (Rate 17+)

Kik – Messaging app

Musical.ly – Record yourself singing or lip-syncing and post on social media (Facebook, Instagram etc.)

AfterSchool – Anonymous messaging board viewable by other users in your location (Rated 17+)

Down to Lunch – Group messaging

Pokemon GO – Location based gaming app



Monitoring Technology Use

Staying on top of the latest technology trends can be challenging. There are a few general tips that can be used to help keep teens safe online, no matter which app they are using.

- Talk to your teen about appropriate use of technology, sexting and cyberbullying. Explain to teens that once something is out there it is always there, even when using SnapChat. Also, discourage sharing personal information online.
- Monitor what apps your teen is using by checking the App Store.
- Use the app yourself to get an idea of how the app works and view how others are using it.
- Regularly monitor settings and make sure profiles are set to private. This setting can change when the app is updated, so check settings regularly.

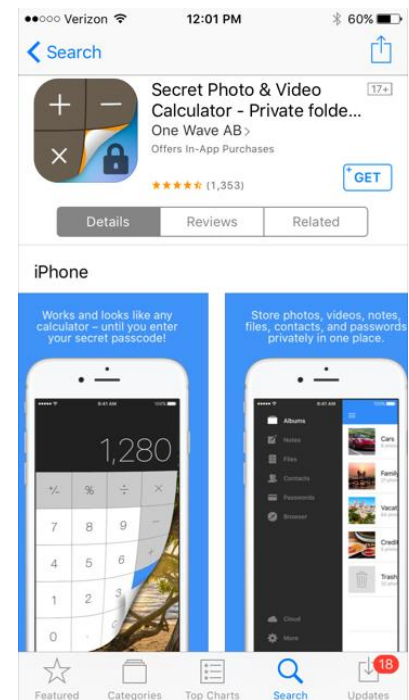
- Apps like AfterSchool use location services. Turn off location services on any apps and the phone itself to protect teens from predators.
- Limit app purchases including free app downloads. You can do this by setting a password that only you know that is required before downloading an app.
- Talk to teens about anonymity and fake profiles. Predators often create fake profiles to target youth. Teens may also create a fake profile to target or bully another teen. (For more information on Cyberbullying, view the SCIP October 2016 Newsletter).
- Ask teens regularly how they are using social media and who they are talking to.

Vault Apps

Vault apps have made it even more challenging to monitor teen activity online. There are dozens of vault apps designed to hide photos, videos, other apps and even web browser bookmarks. The most common vault apps currently available look exactly like a calculator app and even function like a traditional calculator. However, the user can create a passcode that will open a private folder. The user can search the web and download videos without leaving a trace or save contact information that they do not want in their address book.

One reviewer wrote, “I am 17 years old (I turn 18 in October) and I have started modeling recently. I showed my mom one of my implied nude photos from one of my photo shoots, she flipped out. I’ve worked so hard to get the body I have now, and I save my photos that I take, but I don’t need my family/friends seeing my modeling photos. I HIGHLY recommend this app. The calculator is also fully functional!!”

To determine if your child has a vault app on their phone, go to their App Store. Type in “vault” or “secret” in the search bar. If your child has the app, “open” will appear next to the name of the app. If your child does not have the app, “get” will appear next to the name. To determine what other apps your child is using search any app name in the search bar.



Printable resources for parents:

http://www.teensafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/DigitalParentingManifesto_Printable.pdf

http://www.thelearningcommunity.us/Portals/0/Tips%20for%20Parents/Tips%20for%20Parents_Family%20Technology%20Use%20Policy.pdf

Sources:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/25/health/social-media-red-flags-for-parents/index.html>



Holiday Blues?

We refer to it as “The most wonderful time of the year”...but for some it just might be the most difficult time of the year.

While images of love and joy are portrayed in storefronts, on television, and through social media, for many kids and adults, the holidays are not so cheerful.

Between stressful end-of-semester deadlines for students and work deadlines for adults, and/or for those dealing with family conflict, loss, break-ups, divorce, loneliness and increasingly cold and dark winter days, it’s easy for the holiday season to feel not-so-merry and bright.

Let’s face it, the holidays are not always easy and so if the “holiday blues” appear to threaten family fun, here are a few tips for reducing holiday stress:

- Have realistic expectations. Cleaning, decorating, shopping, gift-giving, meal preparation, and visiting can quickly get out of control and overwhelming if you don’t set some limits.
- Make plans and prepare a budget.
- Choose holiday traditions and activities that reflect your family values.
- Maintain regular routines that provide kids with a sense of stability and security.
- Be available to your children. Be a good listener and pay attention to children’s behavior so you can spot symptoms of stress or depression.
- Take care of yourself so that you can take care of your children. Get plenty of sleep, avoid overeating

But what if it seems to be more than the holiday blues...



Major Depression is more than just feelings of sadness and stress during the holidays.

Some symptoms to be aware of include:

- Not wanting to go out or take part in activities that were previously enjoyable
- Withdrawing from social contact with friends and/or family
- Difficulties in concentrating or sleeping
- Feeling overwhelmed, guilty or frustrated
- Experiencing negative thoughts
- Feeling sick, tired or run down all of the time.
- Express feelings of being inadequate or worthless
- Show extreme changes in daily habits, routines, and activities
- Cry easily and often, and/or be frequently angry, sometimes hostile and violent

Depression can be treated successfully, but early diagnosis and intervention are essential. Concerned parents should contact a mental health professional in the school or community if they suspect something more than just the “blues.”

For more information and resources about depression, please visit
the [SCIP web page](http://www.SCIPnebraska.com) www.SCIPnebraska.com

www.huffingtonpost.com/.../holiday-depression_n_6326906.htm

<https://paradigmmalibu.com/tending-teen-depression-holiday-season>

www.teenvogue.com/story/holiday-depression-guide