

# OVER THE COUNTER DRUG ABUSE

Today more than ever, young people are buying their highs legally in the form of over the counter (OTC) drugs. But just because these drugs are legal doesn't mean that they're not dangerous. OTC medications carry just as many hazards as illegal and prescription drugs.

## TYPES OF ABUSED OTC DRUGS:

**20%** of children and adolescents use OTC painkillers too frequently.



### PAINKILLERS

These drugs activate the **opioid receptors** in the brain, helping to block pain. In large quantities, these drugs can cause feelings of euphoria. And if mixed with alcohol or allergy medications, they may **shut down** the lungs.

**50%** of adults take more than the recommended dose.

**8%** of 12th graders report having used OTC diet pills.



### DIET PILLS

These types of medications may be **diuretics** or **laxatives**. They may also include **stimulants**, which may increase energy. Taking large doses of diet pills results in a "buzzed" feeling.

**5%** report using caffeine pills or other energy supplements.

### MOTION SICKNESS MEDICINE

These drugs contain **antihistamines** that, when taken in large quantities, lead to **hallucinations**.



Abuse of OTC medicines is most common among teens between **13 and 16**.

### COUGH MEDICINE

These medicines are the most frequently abused; they include the ingredient **Dextromethorphan (DXM)**. While DXM is effective at suppressing coughs, it is also a **hallucinogenic** narcotic. It's found in a number of OTC medications and can be obtained in **liquid, pill, or powder form**. DXM is also known as Dex, Orange Crush, Skittles, Robo-tripping, and Triple-Cs.



**10%** of teens report abusing cough medicine to get high.

**3** million young people use OTC cough/cold medications non-medically each year.

### SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- NAUSEA
- VOMITING
- TEMPORARY AMNESIA
- MOOD CHANGES
- HALLUCINATIONS
- ANXIETY

### Signs of OTC Drug Abuse

- \* Withdrawing From Friends and Family
- \* Lack of Interest in School, Job, or Hobbies
- \* Empty Cough Medicine Bottles or Boxes
- \* Changes in Physical Appearance and Attitude

### LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- LIVER DAMAGE
- STROKE
- BRAIN DAMAGE
- DEPRESSION
- SEIZURES
- DEATH

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET HELP

If you find yourself going to the medicine cabinet to feel good, or to get through the day, talk to a trusted friend or family member so they can help you.



# OTC DRUGS — LEGAL DOESN'T CANCEL LETHAL