



Florida Department of Law Enforcement

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Office of Statewide Intelligence

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Coricidin Abuse

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SUMMARY

For years, over-the-counter cough syrup has been abused because of its active ingredient dextromethorphan (DXM), which causes a high that can be compared to that of LSD. This high often includes a heightened sense of awareness, altered time perception, and visual hallucinations. In recent years many pills sold as Ecstasy actually contained DXM.¹

Now the over-the-counter cold and flu medicine Coricidin® is taking the place of cough syrup.

Coricidin® is used to treat runny noses, sneezing, sinus headaches, watery eyes, fever, and mild aches and pains.² It is mostly used by patients with high blood pressure, because, unlike most over-the-counter cold and flu medicines, Coricidin® does not contain decongestants, which can raise blood pressure.³ Side effects caused by Coricidin® can be as severe as red or brown grainy vomit; black stools; a ringing or buzzing in the ears; a fast or irregular heartbeat; severe headaches; and trouble breathing. Milder side effects include drowsiness; dry mouth, nose or throat; thickened mucus; stomach upset; headaches; and restlessness.⁴

Taking Coricidin® instead of cough syrup eliminates the nauseating experience that can accompany trying to swallow two to three bottles of Robitussin®. Coricidin® also contains more dextromethorphan (30 milligrams per pill) than most cough syrups (15 milligrams or less per teaspoon).⁵

Teenagers are the ones abusing Coricidin®. A study of 100 patients that were admitted to the hospital with problems related to the consumption of Coricidin® found that 65 of them has abusive intentions. All 65 of these patients were between the ages of 11 and 20. Over 75% of the patients with abusive intentions were between the ages of 13 and 16.⁶

Why are teenagers abusing Coricidin®? Because it is easy to get off the shelf at supermarkets and convenience stores, cheap at less than \$6 a box, and, most importantly, legal. Parents won't get suspicious if they find a box of cold medicine in their child's room, and school officials won't kick a student out if they find it in their locker.

Calling it CCC, Robo, Red Devils, Poor Man's PCP, DXM, and Dex, they are taking 8 to 16 pills at a time.⁷ Abusing Coricidin® is extremely dangerous. An overdose can cause an accelerated heartbeat, high blood pressure, hallucinations, slurred speech, sedation, tremors, seizures, temporary blindness, dilated pupils, severe flushing, a coma, or even death.⁸

Parents and teachers must be aware of this dangerous situation and be constantly on the look out for Coricidin® abuse in teenagers.

Coricidin® Boxes



DXM Pills Sold as Ecstasy



Sources

¹ www.ebasedprevention.org: "Coricidin® HBP™ for Cough and Cold: *an alarming drug trend*".

² **Yahoo! Health Drug Index: "Antihistamine/Analgesic Combinations (Oral)".**

³ www.coricidinhbp.com: "Coricidin HBP Tablets".

⁴ **Yahoo! Health Drug Index: "Antihistamine/Analgesic Combinations (Oral)".**

⁵ *The Beacon Journal*: "Pills Latest Drug Buzz"; Wednesday, February 27, 2002.

⁶ 1999 Annual Report of American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System.

⁷ Toxalert Poison Center: "Adolescent Dextromethorphan Abuse".

⁸ *The Beacon Journal*: "Pills Latest Drug Buzz"; Wednesday, February 27, 2002.