**Latest Danger: Cough Suppressants and Kids**

A new drug trend finds youth in our community abusing cough suppressants to get high. Reports are coming from parents and school officials. The trend reflects a growing national usage rate that includes three teen deaths.

Young people are ingesting cough syrup or pills at three to ten times the recommended dosage. Some users drink cough syrup undiluted or mixed with soda pop. Others soak marijuana in the syrup. Some young people extract a free-base, crystalline form of Dextromethorphan hydrobromide (DXM) from cough syrup by cutting it with solvents found in cigarette lighter fluid and other readily-available agents. Once the drug is isolated, users reportedly smoke, snort or ingest it.

DXM is one of the active ingredients in cough suppressants. When used as directed, it acts as an expectorant. In large doses, it can cause hallucinations, impaired judgment and out-of-body experiences.

Promethazine with codeine is a pain-killing ingredient in some cough medications. Both physical and psychological dependency can result from its abuse. Insomnia, nausea, dizziness, agitation, anorexia, allergic reactions, depression, dilated pupils, high blood pressure, and psychotic episodes are also side effects.

Abuse of cough suppressants can also cause sexual dysfunctions, rashes, tachycardia (increased heart rate), fever, seizures, panic attacks, and brain damage. Overdose deaths are possible. Mixing cough suppressants with alcohol or other drugs can also be deadly.

This new phenomena has introduced new words into our vocabulary. “Leaning” refers to the use of the drug because users lose equilibrium and appear to be “leaning” when standing or walking. “Triple C” is slang for Coricidin Cough & Cold preparation. “Robo Fire” refers to the dangerous practice of first using cough syrup and then huffing vapors from lighter fluid.

Part of the reason for the increasing use of cough remedies appears to be that they are cheap, easily available, perceived as safe, and promoted heavily on pro-drug websites.

Little research has been done to determine if energy drinks are helpful or harmful. The NCAA and some professional sports leagues have banned such stimulants, Pearson said.

“Because they are legal and sold over the counter just like cans of pop, kids who have been raised on caffeine-based drinks think they are perfectly fine,” he said. “We are just now learning the negative effects of caffeine on the human body. We believe it may cause a decline in the body’s immune system.”

Source:   Marc Ransford, Communications Manager, www.bsu.edu/news, April 8, 2003

**Combining Energy Drinks with Alcohol Potentially Dangerous**

A new rage among college students and teens is mixing energy drinks with alcohol, a potentially dangerous combination, says a Ball State University researcher.

Mixing powerful stimulants contained in some energy drinks with depressants in alcohol could cause cardiopulmonary or cardiovascular failures, said David Pearson, a researcher in the Human Performance Laboratory.

“It is scary to think that these energy drinks are being used as a mixer with vodka and whiskey,” he said. “You are just overloading the body with heavy stimulants and heavy depressants.”

Pearson, coordinator of exercise science programs, is the author of “Ask Dr. Dave,” a column for MH-18 magazine and MH-18.com, its online version. The publications are a spin-off of Men’s Health from Rodale Press and are aimed at male teens.

“I think we are going down the same road as when people drink alcohol and ingest ecstasy and other types of designer drugs,” he said. “Some people physically cannot take the combination.”

Energy drinks are one of the latest popular fads among America’s youth culture. With names like Venom, Whoopass, Red Bull, and Adrenaline Rush, energy drinks are being sold by the millions to people looking for a quick boost of energy. Most energy drinks contain large doses of caffeine and other legal stimulants including ephedrine, guarana, taurine, and ginseng. Such drinks are being marketed to people 30 and younger.

Little research has been done to determine if energy drinks are helpful or harmful. The NCAA and some professional sports leagues have banned such stimulants, Pearson said.

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**Single Drink Affects Mind**

Even a single drink of alcohol is enough to impair someone’s ability to reason quickly and detect errors, according to a study that electronically monitored brain waves in volunteers given drinks.

Dutch researchers put sensors on the scalps of 14 men who were tested in three sessions after having a placebo, a single alcohol drink, or several drinks. The volunteers then were challenged in a computer test that required quick thinking and instinctive reasoning.

Changes in brain action were quickly detected even after a single drink, leading the researchers to conclude that alcohol, even in “modest doses,” was enough to erode the mind’s ability to detect and correct errors.

The alcohol was administered using orange juice spiked with vodka containing 37.5 percent alcohol. The dosage was based on the weight of the test subject. The drinks were consumed over a 20-minute period.

Source:   The Associated Press, November 8, 2002

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