



December 19, 2013  
For Immediate Release

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**SURGE IN TEENAGE MEDICATION ABUSE ALARMS HOSPITAL AND POISON CENTER OFFICIALS**  
*Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and Illinois Poison Center partner to raise awareness about dangerous trend*

[Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago's](#) emergency room(ER) physician, Jackie Corboy, MD, has seen 10 cases in one week of young people coming to the ER high on [Dextromethorphan, commonly known as DXM](#), one of the active ingredients in many over-the-counter cold and cough medicines. The incidents she has seen involve teenagers living in the Chicago- area suburbs.

“Three to four years ago we saw a number of teenagers abusing this medication but then it died down the last two years. Now it is back with a vengeance,” said Corboy, who is the Site Medical Director of the Pediatric Emergency Room at [Northwest Community Hospital](#). “This medication is a hallucinogenic so teens come into the ER extremely high. They are often brought in by ambulance from school or by parents from home for behaviors ranging from incoherent to combative. Their responses to conversation and questions are inappropriate – laughing about serious matters or becoming agitated for no reason. Many are vomiting and having muscle spasms which may resemble seizures while others are completely paranoid and anxious.”

A 2008 study found that one in 10 American teenagers has abused products with DXM to get high, making it more popular in that age group than cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, and meth. Although DXM products are safe when taken as recommended, high doses may cause hallucinations, nausea and vomiting, change in muscle reflexes, increased heart rate and blood pressure, psychosis/delirium, seizures, coma and respiratory depression. In addition, DXM is highly addictive.

“Medications are extremely powerful drugs that can be hazardous to a person's health when used improperly. To date, the [Illinois Poison Center](#) has received close to 280 calls on intentional abuse or misuse of DXM in 2013,” said Dr. Carol DesLauriers, Illinois Poison Center (IPC) Operations Director. “This trend is further evidence of the crippling prescription and over- the- counter medication abuse epidemic in Illinois.”

The IPC, in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Public Health, recently released [Prescription Drug Abuse: An Illinois Public Health Crisis](#), an in-depth report detailing the prescription drug abuse epidemic in

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Illinois. Online resources such as [WebMD](#) and [Drugfree.org](#) offer information, even videos, parents can watch and hotline numbers they can call for local resources.

DXM can be found in cough syrup, gel caps and tablets, all of which are available without a prescription, inexpensive and easily accessible on pharmacy and supermarket shelves. Many teens obtain them by stealing them while others enlist older siblings or friends to purchase them. Teens may use slang terms for abusing these medications such as “Robo”, “Skittles”, “Triple C”, “Tussin” and “Dex”.

“If parents or caregivers suspect a teen is taking DXM they need to speak with their primary care physician or call the mental health number on the back of their insurance card,” said Corboy. “If they suspect their child has overdosed they should seek medical treatment immediately. There is no test for these medications, although in high enough amounts a urine test will show a positive result for Phencyclidine also known as PCP.”

Lurie Children's is ranked as one of the top children's hospitals on the [U.S. News & World Report](#) 2013-14 Honor Roll list. It's the pediatric teaching arm for [Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine](#).

The IPC is the state's only and the nation's oldest poison center, serving as a first responder for Illinoisans facing poisoning emergencies, ensuring access to timely poison prevention and treatment services for our children, seniors and families. The IPC's 24-hour toll-free hotline cares for nearly 82,000 calls from Illinoisans annually, with nearly 49 percent of these cases involving children ages five and under.

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