

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



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April 5, 2018

Honorable Representative Jonathan Singer
Honorable Representative Pete Lee
Colorado House of Representatives
200 East Colfax
Denver, CO 80213

Dear Representatives Singer and Lee,

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter (AAP-CO), please accept the following letter in support of HB 18-1307: Limit Access To Products With Dextromethorphan.

As pediatricians we have seen a disturbing trend among adolescents using Dextromethorphan (DXM), which is available as a tablet, capsule, lozenge or liquid/solution OTC (over-the-counter) for use as a non-prescription cough medicine. At supratherapeutic doses, possible side effects may include euphoria, hallucinations, and dissociative episodes. It is commonly abused in middle school and high school and referred to as Dexing, Orange Crush, Robotripping, Skittles, Tussing, Triple C's or Poor Man's PCP.

According to a 2017 Monitoring the Future Surveyⁱ, four percent of all 8th-12th graders have had non-medical use of cough syrup. Additionally, National Poison Control Data showed annual rates of single-substance DXM intentional abuse calls triple in 2000-2006 and then plateau from 2006-2015. Adolescents (14-17 years old) produced an annual rate of 103.6 calls per million population from 2000-2006. From 2006-2015, the rate decreased to 80.9 calls per million populationⁱⁱ. The decline corresponded to a period of growing public health efforts to curtail abuse and a growing number of state enacted age-restriction laws preventing OTC sales to minors.

Not only does the scientific literature demonstrate concerning trends for DXM use, AAP-CO members have seen firsthand the impact of this product when used improperly.

As a hospital-based Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, I have seen growing numbers of children and adolescents admitted to the ICU with altered mental status found to be intoxicated on medications containing DXM. Both for accidental overdose (intentions to get high and lack of awareness of dangerousness of substance) and intentional ingestions endorsed as suicide attempts. As such I routinely screen for OTC cough syrup use/abuse in every patient seen as part of the substance abuse history given how common its use has become in children and teens.

- Beau Carubia, MD

HB-18-1307 is a common-sense measure to help protect Colorado's youth from this harmful and addictive substance, and the state's pediatricians thank you for sponsoring the bill. The AAP-CO urges members of the Health, Insurance and Environment Committee to pass the bill and join the 15 other states with similar age restrictions.

Sincerely,

Steve Perry, MD, FAAP
President
American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter

ⁱ *Monitoring the Future*; Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan; www.monitoringthefuture.org; 2017

ⁱⁱ Karami et al; *Trends in dextromethorphan cough and cold products: 2000–2015 National Poison Data System intentional abuse exposure calls*; *Clinical Toxicology*; December 2017