

# fast facts

## 'Robo' dxm

■ **Overview:** If you believed everything you read on the Internet, you might think that dextromethorphan (or DXM) is destined to be the **Next Big Thing** on the party-till-you-puke legal-drug circuit. Then again, if *you* ever bopped till you barfed or landed in a hospital emergency



room after partying on DXM, you might know better. Because even though DXM *is* legal and *will* mess you up, it's got a long way to

go before it's ever a main selection (or even a featured alternate) in the Drug of the Month Club.

■ **Slang Names:** *Robo*, *skittles*, and *dex*, depending on source product, usually syrups or gelcaps.

■ **Actions/Effects:** A common over-the-counter cough suppressant with few side effects when used as directed, DXM triggers a wide range of effects when used at higher dosage levels. Common low-dose effects include feelings of dizziness and floating, which not all users experience as pleasant. At higher dosage levels, these effects give way to disorientation and thought disturbances, along with vivid hallucinations. In the brain, DXM triggers its psychoactive/dissociative effects at the same receptors targeted by PCP and ketamine, by blocking reuptake of the neurotransmitter *dopamine*.



■ **Medical Uses:** Although dextromethorphan is used mainly as a cough suppressant, it's also used in some medical diagnostic procedures.

■ **Risks/Side Effects:** Since DXM's psychoactive effects only kick in when massive amounts are consumed, common side effects blur together with symptoms of overdose. Besides nausea and vomiting, DXM can also cause itching, rash, and profuse sweating. Excitability and impaired coordination are common signs of overdose, which requires immediate medical attention.



Making DXM especially risky is that many over-the-counter medications which contain the drug also contain other active ingredients, including acetaminophen, which can raise the risk of overdose complications, even death.

■ **Addiction:** While DXM's effects are not considered pleasurable by many users, chronic abuse can lead to an intense form of psychological dependence.

■ **Trends:** Use has been reported in Sweden, Australia, United States, Germany and Canada since the 1960's. In response, some states have moved medications containing DXM behind the counter or limited sale to adults only.

■ **Demographics:** In a national survey of non-medical use of DXM conducted in 2009, 5.9 percent of high school seniors reported prior-year recreational use of products containing the drug, as did 6.0 percent of 10th graders, and 3.8 percent of 8th graders.



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