

# AOD Quarterly



Bringing you the latest information on alcohol and other drugs...

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The term “pharming” refers to pharmaceuticals or prescription medications. A “pharming party” is where adolescents bring prescription medications from home and trade them in for other prescription medications. They sometimes get these pills from their family’s medicine cabinet or from raiding a friend’s medicine cabinet. They take the pills with alcohol at the party for a bigger kick to their high.

Joseph Califano Jr., Chairman of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, also blames the Internet for the widespread availability of prescription drugs. “In 2004, the research firm Beau Dietl & Associates found that only 6 percent of Web sites selling prescription drugs required a prescription. The number of 12 to 17 year olds abusing prescription drugs increased 212 percent in the 11 years CASA examined, while the number of adults abusing prescription drugs increased 81 percent,” according to the study.

Adolescents have found that the family medicine cabinet is a good source of prescription medications for their “pharming parties.” The family medicine cabinet often contains pills that are left over from someone’s pain medication prescription. Teens are under the false impression that, because

**Pharming**



**Parties**

these are clean pills in a clean bottle, they are safe to take. Teens believe that if they are prescriptions, they are not harmful. Prescription medications are easier to find than illegal drugs for some adolescents. They raid the family medicine cabinet or buy a friend’s prescription. Some teens go “doctor shopping” to obtain as many prescriptions as possible by faking symptoms of pain or anxiety. Many teens trade their prescription drugs for other prescription medications.

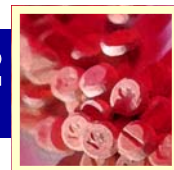
Some of the most popular prescription medications found at “pharming parties” include painkillers such as OxyContin, Demerol, Darvon, Dilaudid, Percocet, Vicodin, and Tylenol with codeine. Central nervous system depressants and anti-anxiety medications include Xanax, Valium, and Ativan. Stimulants prescribed for attention-deficit disorder include Ritalin, Adderall, and Dexedrine. These three drug groups are the most valued trades at “pharming parties.”

Some of the dangers of “pharming parties” include drug overdose and addiction to prescription drugs. Taken without proper supervision, these medications can send teens to the emergency room. Combining alcohol with prescription medications amplifies the effects of both drugs and often causing a drug overdose.

*(Pharming continued on page 2)*

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**D**extromethorphan (DXM) is a synthetically produced ingredient found in many over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medications. It is an opioid agent that is used as a cough suppressant and contains a substance related to codeine. In fact, DXM has gradually replaced codeine as the most widely used cough suppressant in the United States. There are approximately 70-75 different products on the market that contain DXM.

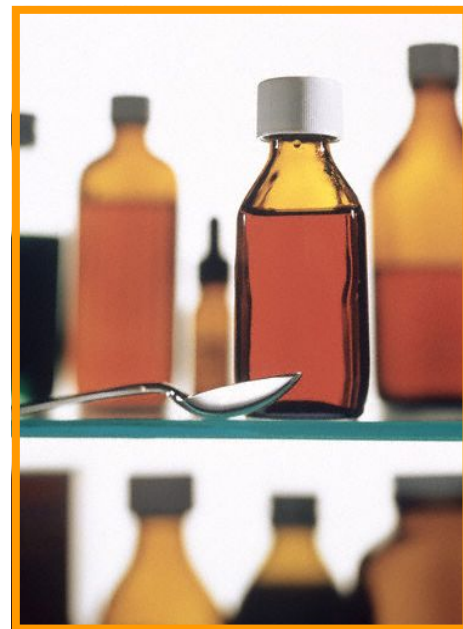
Abuse of DXM by teens has increased dramatically in the past few years. Abusers often take many times the recommended dosage to obtain a high that is similar to the high experienced with LSD. The consumption of large quantities of DXM produces hallucinations and dissociative effects similar to PCP. High doses of DXM can cause an increase in body temperature. Other possible risks of DXM abuse include the following:

- **Nausea**
- **Abdominal pain**
- **Vomiting**
- **Irregular heartbeat**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Headache**
- **Numbness of fingers and toes**
- **Loss of consciousness**
- **Seizure**
- **Brain damage**
- **Kidney damage**
- **Liver damage**
- **Death**

The effects of DXM abuse can last for several hours and include auditory and visual hallucinations. Immediate effects of DXM intoxication include hyperexcitability, lethargy, uncoordinated movements, slurred speech, hypertension, and elevated heart rate. If used with an antidepressant such as Prozac or Paxil, it can cause a deadly condition called serotonin syndrome.

Users can turn to the Internet to research how much DXM it takes to “trip.” They call it “robo-tripping,” “roboing,” or “robo-copping.” Internet sites also can provide access to a pharmaceutical-grade powder of DXM. Information is available through the Internet on how users can obtain capsule shells to make their own DXM capsules for personal use or to sell.

Parents should look for sudden changes in behavior and extreme changes in personality. Lock the medicine cabinet and make medicines that contain DXM less accessible to children. Parents should also monitor the teen’s Internet usage.



*(Pharming continued from page 1)*

Young people can have trouble breathing or have a rapid decrease or increase in heart rate. Teens who abuse prescription drugs are 12 times more likely to move on to illegal drugs, such as heroin, than

are those who don’t, according to a report released in July by CASA. This is especially true for teens who abuse prescription painkillers because these opioids are in the same family as heroin. The brain does not discriminate between

OxyContin and heroin. The brain feels the same effect with both of these psychoactive drugs.

Parents need to be aware of the hidden dangers found in their medicine cabinets. It is never too early to talk with children about the dangers of drugs, including the prescription drugs in the medicine cabinet. Some parents think to lock the liquor cabinet but forget about the medicine cabinet. Parents and other adults are urged to know what is in the family medicine cabinet, take an inventory, and monitor the medications closely. They are also encouraged to remove the prescription medications from the cabinet and secure them in a place that is unavailable to those who might pilfer prescription drugs.



## Not Your Average Snowman...



**T**here is a new T-shirt that is gaining popularity because of its designer and its coded message about drugs. The snowman T-shirt is a creation of the drug-dealer-turned-rapper, Young Jeezy. It displays a picture of a snowman with a menacing look on its face. The back of some of the T-shirts has the saying, "I GOT THAT SNOW...MAN!" These T-shirts have been seen in some schools and are causing some problems because of the hidden drug message they send. Both the snowman on the front and the saying on the back of the shirt make veiled references to cocaine, which is sometimes called "snow."

The T-shirt was first produced for Young Jeezy by Miskeen Originals, a hip-hop fashion firm from New Jersey. These few T-shirts were designed for Jeezy to wear during appearances. However, they also sold many to retailers without having licensed the T-shirt with Jeezy. Now the snowman T-shirt is showing up at many stores and at schools. Parents often do not know the coded meaning behind some of these T-shirts. It seems to be a code that students are aware of but parents and other adults are not.



**M**ethamphetamine is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant drug that is now being used in many areas of the country, according to a report by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). This strong psychomotor stimulant can be taken orally or intravenously. It can also be smoked or snorted. Methamphetamine is often easier to obtain than other illegal substances such as marijuana or ecstasy, because it can be produced in homemade labs right here in the United States. It is made with inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients such as batteries and cold medicine.

According to the Center for Substance Abuse and Research (CESAR), methamphetamine's stimulant effects can last anywhere from 6 to 12 hours, while the effects of crack and cocaine tend to wear off in approximately 20-30 minutes. After taking the drug, a short but intense rush that lasts 5-30 minutes, depending on the route of administration, is followed by increased energy and loss of appetite for up to 12 hours. Methamphetamine users will keep using the drug to maintain feelings of increased energy and well-being. Methamphetamine causes the brain to release dopamine and serotonin, causing an intense rush, or feeling of euphoria. After the effects wear off, the user is often left with feelings of depression, anxiety, and aggression because the brain is depleted of dopamine and serotonin.

Short-term effects of methamphetamine include euphoria, increased energy, increased blood pressure and breathing rate, increased body temperature, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, paranoia, irritability, heavy sweating, and unpredictable behavior. Methamphetamine users also put themselves at risk for sudden seizures, strokes, and cardiac arrest.

Long-term effects include damaged nerve receptors in the brain and Parkinson-like symptoms including tremors, prolonged

anxiety, paranoia, and insomnia. More serious effects for the long-time user include psychotic behavior, including auditory and visual hallucinations, homicidal or suicidal thoughts, infected sores, heart infections, lung disease, and kidney and liver damage.

NIDA describes signs and symptoms of methamphetamine abuse to include agitation, excited speech, decreased appetite, and increased activity levels. Other common symptoms include dilated pupils, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated body temperature. Repetitive behaviors such as compulsive cleaning, grooming, sorting, and disassembling objects have also been seen in methamphetamine users.

According to the University of Michigan's 2005 *Monitoring the Future* survey, the use of meth among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (the grade levels surveyed), has dropped by approximately one-third since 2001. The declines were 34 percent, 30 percent, and 36 percent, respectively, for lifetime, past year, and past month use among these youth.





## WEB SITES

### FOR ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND OTHER DRUGS (ATOD) INFORMATION

#### **Safe and Drug-Free Youth Section**

(For additional copies of the AOD Newsletter, click the 'Newsletter' tab)

[www.fcps.edu/ss/SDFY/index.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/ss/SDFY/index.htm).

#### **Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html)

#### **The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign**

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

#### **Partnership for a Drug-Free America**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

#### **Office of National Drug Control Policy**

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

#### **Virginia Bureau of Law Enforcement, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)**

[www.abc.state.va.us/education.html](http://www.abc.state.va.us/education.html)

#### **Safer Child, Inc**

[www.saferchild.org/](http://www.saferchild.org/)

#### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/CDC**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

#### **American Cancer Society**

[www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/ped\\_10.asp](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/ped_10.asp)

#### **Kick Butts Day**

[www.kickbuttsday.org](http://www.kickbuttsday.org)



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE YOUTH OFFICE FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AT 703-876-5246**

