

DANGERS OF MIXING OTC WITH OTHER DRUGS

Dangers arise when mixing any kind of drugs, prescription or over the counter. It is also very dangerous to mix drugs with alcohol. Most overdoses that result in death are in part because of the mixing of two or more drugs. Using more than one drug at a time is dangerous because different drugs have different effects on your body. This is why alcohol is always risky when you are using any type of drug. Sometimes the drugs can double the effect of each other, like a sleeping pill and cough syrup. Taking too much of the two can cause your body to slow down so much that it forgets to breathe. Combining drugs can be risky whether they are prescription, illegal, or over the counter drugs. Problems begin to happen when people aren't paying close attention to what they are putting into their bodies. It is especially hard for people to avoid making mistakes with drugs when they visit different types of doctors. Imagine this. You have a sore throat, so you stop by a clinic and they prescribe you some pain pills. That night you take some cough syrup, hoping it will help your sore throat go away. Your throat hurts so bad that you can't sleep, so you take some sleeping pills. Even though it seems innocent and safe, this is a deadly combination.



THE TRUTH ABOUT OTC DRUGS

Do you know the truth about OTC drugs? Test your knowledge with these true or false questions!

True or False:

- Over the counter drugs are any kind of drugs you can purchase without a prescription from your doctor.
a. True b. False
- Only prescription drugs have the ability to slow down or speed up your central nervous system.
a. True b. False
- DXM is a mix of soda and cough syrup.
a. True b. False
- Using more than one drug at a time is dangerous because different drugs have different effects on your body.
a. True b. False
- Combining drugs can be risky only if they are illegal, or over the counter drugs. Prescription drugs are always safe.
a. True b. False



ANSWERS: 1. a, 2. b, 3. b, 4. a, 5. b



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CAUSE AND EFFECT

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OTC AND YOUR BODY



WHAT ARE OTC DRUGS?

Over the counter drugs are any kind of drugs you can purchase without a prescription from your doctor. Some examples are pain and headache relief and allergy medications. OTC drugs are far more serious than they appear. Drugs such as DXM, “Sizzurp”, Ephedra and Loperamide can be extremely dangerous, despite not needing a prescription. DXM is the active ingredient in most cough syrups. While cough syrup is seemingly harmless, it has been reported as being abused. Many teens falsely believe that because it does not require a prescription, that it is harmless. Ephedra and Loperamide are both extremely addictive in a very short span of time.

It is easy to abuse OTC drugs without even realizing that you are becoming addicted. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) tells us if the drug is safe enough to be over the counter. Although the drug is safe in its correct dosage, any drug can become dangerous if overused. It is never okay to take more than the recommended dosage of any drug.

Here are some risks of OTC drugs:

- Negative interactions with other drugs
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Allergic reactions
- Dangerous reactions for pregnant mothers
- Incorrect dosage for children

EFFECTS ON CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

Both OTC drugs and prescription drugs have the ability to slow down or speed up your central nervous system. This affects your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, and temperature. Drugs also have a serious effect on the chemicals in your brain including dopamine, serotonin, gamma-aminobutyric acid and norepinephrine. Those are fancy words for the chemicals that affect things like your mood, stress and anxiety, pleasure, and attentiveness.

EFFECTS ON COORDINATION

When someone does drugs for a long time, their brain starts to depend on the drug to function. Drugs affect your brain stem and changes the way your body goes about doing certain tasks. The brain stem is responsible for:

- Your heart rate
- Breathing
- Ability to fall asleep
- Ability to stay asleep



After someone becomes dependent on a drug, their brain gets used to performing these tasks while on a drug. This makes it difficult for the brain to do its job once it is not filled with drugs. That’s why most drug addicts find it extremely difficult to get off drugs. It’s also responsible for withdrawal symptoms, drug cravings and addiction.



CLAIRA’S STORY

Claira and her boyfriend Matthew went to a party one night with a bunch of friends. Everyone at the party was drinking alcohol and “Sizzurp.” Also known as Purple Drank is a mix of fruit flavored soda and cough syrup. They got extremely high, but still managed to make it home safe. The next day, Clairra found Matthew passed out on his bedroom floor. She knew that he probably overdosed from the drugs and didn’t want his parents to find out, so she didn’t call for help and tried to help him herself. She tried to wake him up, but he was in and out of consciousness. He started choking and could barely breathe, so she decided to call for help. She called 9-1-1 and they sent an ambulance to help Matthew. When they got there, they gave him oxygen and a drug to help him wake up. They put him in the ambulance and started driving to the hospital, but Matthew’s heart stopped on the way. They continued giving him oxygen and started giving him compressions, but it didn’t work. Matthew died before he even made it to the hospital. Clairra was in the ambulance when he died and immediately realized that she would have to explain to Matthew’s parents why he died. Matthew’s parents got to the hospital and were so confused how their healthy teenage boy passed so suddenly. The doctors explained Matthew’s death to them, but they wanted to hear it from Clairra. She explained what happened at the party and that she was so sorry that she couldn’t save him. Clairra would never feel a greater guilt in her life.