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## Cold pill coma (DXM) <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I had a recent near death experience on a cough and cold remedy pill called Coricidin. Friends and I used it as a quick trip. I know people that have had their eyeballs bleed out and go into comas from tripping off this pill, and I also about died. I have found stuff on the net about this and its dangers. It's called the "poor man's ecstasy" and it's a dangerous medication to have on the shelves. If they know it's that dangerous, then why do they keep selling it? I am worried about the lives of many young teens like myself that are going to die or end up in a coma.

### Answer

Dear Reader,

Thank you for caring enough about others who, like yourself, may have been (or will be) affected tripping on Coricidin. While it's intended to make us feel better from that annoying cough that just won't go away, cold medicine may, in some cases, be dangerous as well. The main ingredient in Coricidin that allows you to get that "quick trip" is dextromethorphan (aka DXM), which is used as a cough suppressant in these medications. When taken in large amounts, however, DXM may lead to severe health risks. For more information on DXM and its health risks, check out [Trippin' on cough medicine](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in the *Go Ask Alice!* alcohol and other drugs archives.

Some formulations of Coricidin, Robitussin DM, and other over-the-counter cold/flu medicines still contain DXM. Due to DXM's potential for abuse, legislators at local, state, and federal levels have tried to restrict DXM sales, some with more success than others.

Since 2007, it has been prohibited to sell raw DXM (except to drug companies) in the United States. Although there is no nationwide law that restricts sale of DXM to minors, DXM sales to minors have been restricted in a number of states and regions. Some retailers, including well known drug store and pharmacy chains, have taken measures to ensure that purchasers of cough medicine are at least 18 years of age, most often by placing these products behind the pharmacy counter. In some areas customers are required to show proof of age and the sales are documented.

With regard to eyes bleeding out and other health consequences, there is little documented

medical evidence of such dramatic conditions, not to say that they may not have occurred. Some individuals that seek medical attention after using products containing DXM do not always admit to using the medication and that makes for difficulty in tracking consequences. You are correct that some deaths have been connected to this medication, and for some populations there are different formulas to help reduce the risk of negative side effects and potential unintended consequences. It is important to note that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that Coricidin (and other products containing dextromethorphan) is safe when used as directed.

If you would like more information on cough medicine abuse, and possibilities for getting involved in educating people like yourself about its potential dangers, you may want to visit the [Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America](#) <sup>[3]</sup> (CADCA) website.

Thanks again for your question,

Alice!

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