



EMPOWERING PARENTS TO RAISE
THEIR CHILDREN TO BE SUBSTANCE-FREE

Talk Early And Often About Alcohol, Tobacco And Other Drugs, Even When It Gets Tough



Know! Alert – Cough Syrup Abuse

In this Know! Alert we are warning teachers and school administrators about youth getting high on **cough syrup**. While young people abusing cough medicine is nothing new, it seems to have grown again in popularity, with one in 10 teens partaking nationwide.

Most commonly referred to as **Purple Drank, Syrup, Sizzurp** and **Lean**, this candy-flavored, cough syrup cocktail has long been glamorized in hip hop music and now among numerous other celebrities. Lil Wayne, a superstar rapper among today's youth, literally sings the praises of Purple Drank in the song dedicated to his drug of choice called, "Me and My Drank." Incidentally, Lil Wayne was hospitalized last year after a reported Purple Drank binge, and near-fatal overdose. Another megastar celebrity, Justin Bieber, has also helped to put this 'Drank' in the media spotlight. After his recent Miami Beach DUI and drag-racing arrest, reports swirled that he too is addicted to the mix.

So what exactly is in this purple drink and what makes it so appealing? It is prescription-strength cough syrup (codeine and promethazine – which also causes the purple hue) that is typically mixed with sprite or other soda and a Jolly Rancher candy (to mask the bitter flavor of the cough syrup); said to provide the user with a relaxed, euphoric high.

Because it is a colorful, sweet-tasting concoction made with a perceived 'legal' drug, it is many times thought to be harmless among young users. Health experts say however, this couldn't be further from the truth. This dangerously addictive, potentially fatal mix has the ability to depress the central nervous and respiratory systems, and cause the heart and lungs to shut down. Other non-fatal side effects from the Purple Drank include drowsiness, dry mouth, nausea, dizziness, itchiness, constipation, urinary retention, impaired vision, memory loss, confusion, hallucinations and seizures. As referenced earlier, it is often called 'Lean' because it commonly causes the user to lose coordination and have to lean on something to be able to remain standing.

It is vitally important to talk to students about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription drugs of any kind, even those that appear to be less harmful, like cough medicine. Youth should also be aware that it is illegal for anyone to use another person's prescription cough medication, whether to treat an actual cough or for recreational use, and there can be legal consequences to accompany the potential physical and mental health consequences.

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

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Get the conversation started in your classroom by asking your students if they have heard of the various slang terms for the mix, find out what they know about it, then take the opportunity to dispel the myths and provide the facts.

Sources: [USA Today - Sizzurp: What you need to know about cough syrup high, Narconon International: Info on Purple Drank. National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\) – Emerging Trends: Purple Drank](#)



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