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Manhasset CASA Reminds Parents of Over-the Counter Medicine Abuse

As part of its *Lock Your Meds: Be Aware Don't Share* Awareness Campaign, Manhasset CASA reminds parents of the dangers of over-the counter cough medicine as it is readily available to teens in medicine cabinets, drug stores and supermarkets. Teens have codenames for it: *Skittles, Robo, Triple Cs, Dex, Tussin, and Vitamin D* and it is the practice of getting high by taking large doses of over-the-counter (OTC) cough medications.

The "high" is caused by dextromethorphan, known familiarly as DXM, and is an active ingredient in more than 100 nonprescription cough syrups, tablets, and gel caps like Dimetapp DM, Robitussin, Sudafed and Vicks 44. A normal dose of cough medicine is 15–30 milligrams. Nationally, teens report having taken 25–50 times the recommended doses.

DXM, when used as directed, has a long history of being safe and effective. However, when taken in large doses, it can produce a hallucinogenic high, along with dangerous side effects, caused by the DXM itself or other active ingredients in the medicine. Among them are stomach pain and heart problems, as well as delusions, depression, high blood pressure, loss of consciousness, nausea and vomiting, numbness, rashes, and seizures.

DXM reported overdoses typically occur in clusters, as word about the "high" spreads in a community's middle and high schools. According to 2009 data collected by the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future study, the intentional abuse of cough medicine among eighth, 10th, and 12th graders is at 3.8 percent, 6 percent, and 5.9 percent, respectively.

Some possible signs of abuse might include your teen: making frequent purchases of OTC cough preparations from the same or different stores, or from the Internet (for example, note the arrival of unexpected packages); hiding cough medicine bottles in his/her bedroom; exhibiting odd behavior; declining grades; having a loss of interest in friends and activities; or experiencing hallucinations and/or any of the side effects mentioned above.

As part of the *Lock Your Meds: Be Aware Don't Share* Awareness Campaign, CASA reminds parents to be vigilant about their medicine cabinets. Know what's in there, keep track of your medicines, and discard OTC and prescription medications that you don't need. If you suspect a problem, immediately contact a local substance abuse prevention/intervention professional, such as your pediatrician or family doctor.

For further information regarding teen cough medicine abuse or the Lock Your Meds campaign, please contact Manhasset CASA at 516-267-7548 or go to www.manhassetcasa.org.



Manhasset CASA recently met with Rotary Club members to discuss its *Lock Your Meds Be Aware Don't Share* Campaign. Pictured left to right are Rotary members: Fred Geiger, Bob Mitchell, Cathy Samuels, Manhasset CASA, Sue Lucarelli, Tony DiStefano, Lisbeth Shibley, Manhasset CASA, Brenda Damiani, Dick Law, Lee McAllister, Tony Buzzitta and Robbie Donno